

Pierre Paul Prud'hon and the Genius of Allegory

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Abstract

Pierre Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823) lived and worked as an artist during the last years of the French Monarchy, the Revolution, the Republic, the Empire and finally the Restoration. He mostly worked with allegory, setting him apart from other artists at the time, such as Jacques Louis David. While Prud'hon was a significant artist in his own time, he is only just being rehabilitated today. In this thesis I trace Prud'hon's artistic career as an allegorical painter through the different governments, examining thematically his different types of allegories, from the moral to the political. In particular, the context of allegory is examined, including how Prud'hon approaches allegory and criticism and interpretation of his use of allegory. This examination of Prud'hon highlights what was so unusual about Prud'hon's art – primarily his use, with reasonable success, of allegory. This alone makes it clear that he should be held in higher regard by today's art historians.

Introduction

Pierre Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823) worked during one of the most crucial times of change in French history, the Revolution, and his work is still significant today for a number of reasons. Prud'hon almost exclusively worked with the concept of allegory, a mode of expression which was seen as outdated by the French Revolution. Furthermore, the way he approached allegory was significantly different from that used by other artists, both in the past and in his own era. These painters, and in particular Jacques-Louis David, can largely be classified as part of the Neoclassical movement. Prud'hon's style also differed from that of contemporary artists whose works presented mainly masculine virtues and heroes. Prud'hon's characters were mainly female and represented 'feminine' qualities, such as love, innocence and friendship. However, Prud'hon's style cannot be so easily classified, with elements of the Rococo, Neoclassical and Romantic styles present in his work. This eclectic approach can be better understood when the historical context within which he worked is considered. For Prud'hon, despite, or because of his unique style, was able to work through a number of governments, from the Revolution right through to the Republic. This indicates that while his work was in contrast to the 'popular' art of his time, there was still a place for it in the ever changing face of France. Furthermore, Prud'hon consistently worked with allegorical themes despite these changes in government, indicating that while political changes may have altered his subject matter, they did not affect his choice of presentation. Prud'hon's use of allegory is precisely what makes his work so difficult to understand today, but also what is the most fascinating aspect of his works.

Outline

Chapter One will provide the artistic and political context to Prud'hon's era. I will introduce the *Académie Royale* and its place in the French art world. Next I will discuss the hallmarks of the Rococo, and Neoclassical styles, and the reasons for the decline of the Rococo. Then I will outline important political developments throughout the different periods of governance, and demonstrate how these affected the artists. This provides the crucial context not only for Prud'hon's career, but also for the careers of his contemporaries.

The second chapter will provide a definition of allegory and review the different types of allegories. It will also discuss allegory through the ages, from its origin in ancient Greece and Rome, to the nineteenth century. This section will introduce the theory of *Ut Pictura Poesis* and the resulting problems that occurred with this theory in the eighteenth century. Lastly, I will examine the role of allegory in art throughout the changes in government, from the Monarchy right through to the Restoration.

The third chapter introduces Pierre Paul Prud'hon, to show how he fits into the historical contexts addressed in Chapters One and Two. I will compare Prud'hon's art to the prevailing styles of his time – the Rococo, the Neoclassical and the Romantic – and then evaluate where Prud'hon's works fit in. This chapter also aims to dispel some myths concerning Prud'hon particularly that he was a tragic loner, and therefore will discuss Prud'hon's participation in the artistic and political communities of his time.

The fourth, and final, chapter looks specifically at Prud'hon's allegories. The allegories will be presented thematically, looking at their meaning and the influences behind them. The first category examines Prud'hon's moral allegories; the second category looks at abstract political allegories and the third allegorical political portraits. In this, I will discuss what aspects of Prud'hon's allegories are traditional, and what aspects are innovative. Then I will re-introduce the problems raised by the doctrine of *Ut Pictura Poesis*, discussed in Chapter Two, and show how Prud'hon overcame these obstacles. I conclude with a discussion of Prud'hon's relationship to allegory as a whole and an assessment of his artistic legacy.

My original intention was to interpret Prud'hon's allegories through Erwin Panofsky's iconographical theories; however this became too problematic to apply to Prud'hon's works, in particular because Panofsky's system was devised for Renaissance art. Instead, in Chapter Two I outline Goran Hermeren's different types of allegories, which I have applied to Prud'hon's allegories. By looking at criticism from Prud'hon's era, and contrasting this with modern scholarship my aim is to show how the interpretation and reception of Prud'hon's works has changed over time. While modern critics are more interested in the interpretation of his allegories, Prud'hon's contemporaries appeared to be more concerned with his technical ability. This does not mean that subject matter was of no concern to Prud'hon's contemporaries, but rather their acceptance of it, whereas current scholars are more concerned with interpreting allegories because their subjects have become more obscure with the passage of time. This shift in response between the era of Prud'hon and today reflects the changes in the status of allegory. Furthermore, this

also introduces the debate whether modern audiences, without properly understanding the concept of allegory, can truly appreciate Prud'hon's works.

Biography

Pierre Paul Prudon (Prud'hon) was born in 1758 in Cluny, Burgundy, the tenth child of stonemason Christophe and Françoise Prudon. Prud'hon's talent was recognised early on, earning him a place at the provincial Beaux Arts school of Dijon (Burgundy), directed by Francois Devosge (1732-1811).¹ Early in his career, Prud'hon was fortunate to obtain as a patron Jean-Baptiste-Anne-Geneviève Gaignard, the Baron de Joursanvault (1748-1793), who not only sponsored Prud'hon, but also taught him the rudimentary skills of printmaking.² In 1778, Prud'hon married Jeanne Pennet, and their first son, Jean, was born nine days after the wedding. At this time, he also altered the spelling of his name from Prudon, to Prud'hon, and adopted the middle name Paul, after Peter Paul Rubens.³

¹ By 1789, there were thirty provincial academies like the Dijon school. As well as Prud'hon, Devosge mentored Francois Rude, and Petitot. Devosge placed great importance on drawing skill, which he passed on to Prud'hon. Guffey also attributes Prud'hon's androgynous forms with elongated limbs to Devosge's influence. Devosge's school was based on Enlightenment principles, and despite being a regional school, had modern ideas. This is evident in the advice he gave to Prud'hon - 'form a style that was not from any one master or any one school'. Described by Guffey as the 'provincial version of LeBrun', Devosge primarily worked for the House of Condé. Elizabeth Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line: The Art of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon*, London, Associated University Presses, 2001, pp. 18-21. Today, many of Prud'hon's and Devosge's works can be found within the institution that supported them, now the Musée des Beaux Arts at Dijon.

² Joursanvault was a genealogist, distinguished diplomat, collector of maps and manuscripts and a philanthropic figure. Renaud Icard, 'Une Lettre inédite de Prud'hon', *La Revue Hebdomadaire*, Vol. 29, July, Paris, Norrit et Cie, 17 July, 1920, p. 305. Prud'hon was one of four local artists that Joursanvault supported – the others were Bénigne Gagneraux, Jean Naigeon and Claude Ramey. He was also the owner of a hotel and castle in the Côte-d'Or and also sponsored Prud'hon to become a Freemason. Sylvain Laveissière, 'Le Premier Tableau de Prud'hon retrouvé : Allégorie en l'honneur du Baron de Joursanvault', *Revue du Louvre*, 55, no. 5, 2005, pp. 17 -19. Joursanvault was not only a patron, but also influenced Prud'hon's art. Joursanvault taught Prud'hon the rudimentary skills of printmaking and they collaborated to create prints from Prud'hon's original works.² Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, pp. 24-25.

³ Charles Clément, 'Prud'hon: Sa Vie, ses Œuvres et sa Correspondance', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, T2, 1869, p. 389.

From 1780-1783 Prud'hon left his wife and two children to work in Paris, alongside fellow Burgundian artists who were also sponsored by Joursanvault, Jean Naigeon and Claude Ramey.⁴ In 1783 Prud'hon returned to Dijon and won the Burgundy state's *Prix de Rome* for that year. Prud'hon spent the next three years in Rome, and completed his obligatory work for the Burgundian state, *The Glorification of Burgundy*. While in Rome, Prud'hon met Quatremère de Quincy and Antonio Canova. It was in Rome that Prud'hon's admiration for Renaissance masters, such as Leonardo and Raphael grew.

In 1788, Prud'hon returned to Paris and began his collaboration with the printmaker Jacques-Louis Copia. In 1793 Prud'hon, along with Copia, produced the engravings *Love Laughs at the Tears He Causes* and *Love Bound to Reason*. In 1793 he also submitted *The Union of Love and Friendship* to the Salon, and in 1794 he presented to the Committee of Public Education three of his engravings, *Liberty, the Law* and *Equality*. In 1795, Prud'hon was awarded a prize for the *Concours de l'An II*, for his drawing *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth*. From 1798-1801, Prud'hon began his career in interior decorating, designing a salon for the Hôtel de Lannoy, Paris. He took on his first apprentice in 1803, Marie-Françoise-Constance Mayer La Martinière, known as Constance Mayer, a former pupil of Greuze, who soon became Prud'hon's lover as well as artistic collaborator.⁵ That same year, Madame Prud'hon was committed to a mental asylum after causing a scene in front of the Empress Josephine.⁶ During the imperial

⁴ Sylvain Laveissière, *Pierre-Paul Prud'hon*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998, p. 19.

⁵ Mayer came from a rich and distinguished family and she was well educated. Clément, p. 334.

⁶ Laveissière, p. 22.

years, Prud'hon found another patron, Nicholas Frochot, the Prefect of the Seine.⁷ Frochot commissioned *Divine Justice and Vengeance Pursuing Crime* for the Palais de Justice, and it was through Frochot's influence that Prud'hon was able to gain entry into the Bonapartes' circle. For Napoleon's second marriage, Prud'hon was hired by Frochot to design the decorations for the celebratory ball, as well as designing a toilette for the new empress, Marie Louise. Prud'hon achieved further imperial favour when he was chosen by Denon, Napoleon's artistic advisor, to be Marie Louise's drawing instructor.⁸ For his service to the arts, as well as the Bonaparte family, Prud'hon was awarded the Legion of Honour in 1808. In 1811, for the birth of Napoleon's heir, Prud'hon painted *The King of Rome* and he also designed the cradle that was presented to the heir by the city of Paris.

⁷ In the Napoleonic era, Prud'hon received the commission for his most famous painting *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*. This work was commissioned by Frochot, the prefect of the Seine from 1800 to 1812. Prud'hon met Frochot in 1794, while painting portraits in the Haute Seine, Laveissière, p. 21. Both had a mutual friend in Quatremère de Quincy. Thomas Kirchner, 'Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's *La Justice et La Vengeance Divine Poursuivant le Crime*: Mahnender Appell und Asthetischer Genus', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 54, Munich, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1991, p. 541. They also became friends, and Frochot '(le) suivit et l'encourage dans les difficultés de sa carrière'. Eugene Delacroix, 'Peintres et Sculpteurs Modernes. Prudhon', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 1846, p. 436.

Frochot also gave Prud'hon artistic freedom when creating *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*: 'Prud'hon aura sans doute proposé le choix'. Anatole de Montaiglon, "Des Nouvelles Acquisitions Du Musée des Dessins du Louvre", *Collection du Journal La Lumière, Revue de la Photographie*, Paris, Société Héliographie, 1852, p. 199.

⁸ Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon (1747-1825) was Napoleon's artistic advisor and held as such enormous sway over the art world. An engraver, draughtsman and diplomat, Denon accompanied Napoleon on his conquest of Egypt, publishing his self illustrated book, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte*, which added to France's mania for all things Egyptian. From 1804 to 1815, Denon was the director of the national museums and undertook the mammoth task of establishing a national collection worthy of Napoleon. Ian Chilvers, 'Denon, Dominique-Vivant, Baron', *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 158. He also selected Prud'hon to paint one of his few history paintings, *The Meeting of Napoleon and François II at Saruchitz*, Laveissière p. 24. Denon was not only responsible for Prud'hon's major commissions, but he also nominated Prud'hon for the Legion of Honour – which he received in 1808. Denon's favourable treatment of Prud'hon might be a result of their similar birthplace, in Burgundy, Laveissière p. 201. Denon not only favoured Prud'hon in an official capacity, but also commissioned a portrait from him: *Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon*, 1812, Louvre, oil on canvas, unfinished.

However, Prud'hon's luck began to change in 1812 when Frochot was dismissed as Prefect of the Seine, and Prud'hon's son, Jacques-Philippe, died in the disastrous Russian campaign. By 1814 Napoleon had been defeated, and Prud'hon lost his job as drawing instructor to the Empress when she fled Paris. Although Napoleon was briefly restored to power, his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo left Prud'hon at an uncertain time in his career. The Bourbons were restored to power, and Prud'hon's art was no longer suitable for this new regime. While his masterpiece, *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* was removed from the Palais de Justice, Prud'hon, on the whole, was not penalised by his connections to Napoleon.⁹ He was made a full member of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* in 1816, but unfortunately, tastes had changed, and the demand was for religious paintings.¹⁰ Prud'hon received two commissions for *Assumption of the Virgin* and *Christ on the Cross*. Prud'hon abandoned projects, and several were cancelled – it was Prud'hon's advancing age and inability to adapt to the new regime that ultimately proved his undoing. In 1821, he was devastated by the suicide of his partner, Constance Mayer, upon whom he was financially reliant. In 1822, Prud'hon finished one of Mayer's paintings, *The Unhappy Family* in order to raise funds for her headstone. Prud'hon spent the remaining years of his life depressed and alone, isolated from his children. He wrote: 'all my thoughts turn on melancholy things. All that remains of my past happiness is an empty dream, painful memories and bitter regret'.¹¹ When Prud'hon died in the following year, he left his paintings to one of his students, Boisfremont. However, most of the works had to be auctioned off to pay Prud'hon's debts. Prud'hon was buried in Père

⁹ Laveissière, p. 25.

¹⁰ It took Prud'hon twenty years to make the transition from *membre associé* to a full member. Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 216.

¹¹ August 15, 1822, Laveissière, p. 298.

Lachaise cemetery, in Paris and was survived by four children, the eldest, Jean, also an artist.¹²

Literature Review

The literature that exists on Prud'hon offers a twofold perspective. Some of this literature attempts to explain his development as an artist and the influences on him. The second part of the literature review explores the different attitudes to Prud'hon's work. This pertains to evaluations of style, the significance of his relationship with other artists and their attitudes to his use of allegory.

The majority of scholarship on Prud'hon emerged in the nineteenth century. The first biography of Prud'hon, *Notice Historique sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de P.P.Prud'hon, Peintre, Membre de la Légion-D'Honneur et de l'Institut*, was completed in 1824, a year after his death, by Jacques Phillip Voiart. The Goncourt brothers published two works featuring Prud'hon: *L'Art du Dix-huitième Siècle* in 1873 and a catalogue of Prud'hon's works, *Catalogue Raisonné de l'oeuvre Peint, Dessine et Grave de P. P. Prud'hon* in 1876. Most of the nineteenth century scholarship is found in periodicals, such as Houssaye's 'Prud'hon' in *L'Artiste* of 1844; Delacroix's 'Peintres et Sculpteurs Modernes. Prudhon' in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of 1846 and Clément's 'Prud'hon: Sa

¹² Prud'hon had six children: Jean (1778-1837), Jean-Baptiste-Anne (1780, died three months after birth), Jacques-Philippe (1791-1812), Eudamidas (also called Hippolyte, 1793-1879), Pierre-Nicolas-Philopoemen (1795-1824), Émilie (1796, 1879) Charles Guellette, 'Notes et Renseignements Inédits sur Prud'hon et sa Famille', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, séries 2, vol. 32, 1885, p. 152.

Vie, ses Œuvres et sa Correspondance', in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1869. Within the twentieth century, Prud'hon scholarship dropped considerably, with the last biography of him published by Forest in 1913. Virtually nothing was published on Prud'hon until Julius Held's 1943 article 'A Forgotten Prud'hon in New York', in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. It was another twenty-two years until Anita Brookner published her articles 'Prud'hon: Master Decorator of the Empire' in *Apollo* and 'Prud'hon's The Union of Love and Friendship' in *ARTnews*. Towards the end of the twentieth century, Prud'hon scholarship increased with John Elderfield's *The Language of the Body: Drawings by Pierre Paul Prud'hon* in 1996, followed by Elizabeth Menon's article 'Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's Union of Love and Friendship Reconsidered' in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. The major work of Prud'hon scholarship to date is Sylvain Laveissière's *Pierre-Paul Prud'hon*, a catalogue published in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition on Prud'hon at the Grand Palais, in Paris. The latest work is Elizabeth Guffey's book, *Drawing an Elusive Line: The Art of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon*, published in 2001. Because there are few books solely on Prud'hon, nineteenth century materials, such as periodicals, have been invaluable.

The early nineteenth century sources, such as Voiart, Clément and Houssaye provide the essential biographical details, and especially information about Prud'hon's early life. However, these early sources contain anecdotes of dubious authenticity and are heavily biased against Prud'hon's wife.¹³ With the benefit of hindsight, it is the more recent

¹³ Voiart recounts that when competing for the *Prix de Rome*, Prud'hon assisted another contestant, who then won. Prud'hon was only awarded the prize after this was revealed. Apart from Voiart's assertions, which have been repeated in source after source, there is no evidence to prove this incident was true, and

writers that have been able to assess artistic influences on Prud'hon. In particular, research by Helen Weston has explored influences in *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*, as well as Menon's and Brookner's articles regarding *The Union of Love and Friendship*. Laveissière's catalogue has also reunited many of Prud'hon's paintings, providing a more accurate reading of Prud'hon's influences across his works.

Many of the sources that discuss Prud'hon's style are in disagreement, making it almost impossible to place Prud'hon within an artistic movement. Laveissière largely avoids the issue, but does discuss the influence of Renaissance and classical art on Prud'hon. Brookner classifies Prud'hon as a Romantic but then contradicts herself by describing Prud'hon as a Neoclassicist in 'Aspects of Neoclassicism in French Painting'.¹⁴ For the nineteenth century writers, labelling Prud'hon's style was not an important issue, mainly because these styles, particularly Neoclassicism and Romanticism were not given formal names and descriptions until much later. That is not to say that these early writers had no influence on later pronouncements of style. While Delacroix does not pronounce Prud'hon a Romantic, he does make the connection between Géricault and Prud'hon.¹⁵ Indeed, it is the descriptions of Prud'hon's temperament and unfortunate life in these earlier works that have inadvertently led later scholars to label Prud'hon a Romantic.¹⁶

the story generally only serves to promote Prud'hon's character. In regards to Prud'hon's wife, nineteenth century sources are rife with comments on how his wife ruined his life – Arsene Houssaye in 'Prud'hon', *L'Artiste*, 3rd Series, 5 January, 1844, p. 4., calls his wife 'une mauvaise femme', p.7. Clément writes 'la misère, que les gaspillages et les criailleries de sa femme rendaient plus intolérable et plus profonde était à la maison', p. 214.

¹⁴ Anita Brookner, 'Aspects of Neoclassicism in French Painting', *Apollo* Vol. 68, 1958. See p. 82.

¹⁵ Delacroix says Géricault had 'toute la grâce, tout la finesse, toute l'abondance du génie de Prud'hon'. p. 447.

¹⁶ See p. 82.

Despite almost two hundred years of scholarship on Prud'hon, scholars that investigate the significance of Prud'hon's relationships with other artists all discuss the same thing: Prud'hon's relationship with David. As early as 1844, Houssaye was contrasting Prud'hon with David.¹⁷ The Goncourt brothers reinforced this idea later.¹⁸ Recent scholarship also makes this comparison. Held is still making the comparison in 1943.¹⁹ While Laveissière briefly discusses Prud'hon and David, he does not present them as competitors, merely 'artists represent[ing] two different conceptions of painting'.²⁰ I have chosen to comment on this issue despite there being little primary source evidence for a rivalry between David and Prud'hon.²¹ However, I feel it is an important argument to address, not to comment on any rivalry between them, but on how scholars have perceived a rivalry between them. As two artists working at the same time, David is the ideal contrast to Prud'hon, because David reveals just how different Prud'hon's art was to the prevailing art of the time.

An important part of the scholarship on Prud'hon is the attitudes to his use of allegory. Delacroix, in particular, admires Prud'hon's allegories to the point of bias, which he admits: 'Si nous ne sommes point trompé par notre partialité en faveur de Prudhon, nous croyons que les qualités de cet aimable génie sont de celles qui doivent assurer dès à présent sa renommée'.²² The Goncourts presented Prud'hon's allegories thematically, in

¹⁷ Houssaye compares David and Prud'hon to Lebrun and Lesueur of the previous century, p. 5.

¹⁸ See p. 93.

¹⁹ See p. 93.

²⁰ Laveissière, p. 12.

²¹ First of all, Prud'hon never commented on David's art, and we only have a small extract of David's opinion of Prud'hon - see p. 93.

²² Delacroix, p. 451.

categories such as 'political allegories' and 'moral allegories', rather than chronologically. It is this thematic method of organization that has influenced the way I have chosen to discuss Prud'hon's allegories. Prud'hon's relationship with allegory is also what fascinates recent scholars – in particular how to interpret his allegories. Menon and Brookner specifically discuss *The Union of Love and Friendship* while Stéphane Guégan contemplates 'Les Troublantes Allégories de Prud'hon' in the *Beaux Arts Magazine* of 1997. Specifically, the concept of allegory has become more important as time has passed, owing to the general decline in the use of allegory. In Laveissière's book, interpretation of Prud'hon's allegories is as important as the artistic processes that Prud'hon went through. One weakness of Laveissière's book is that it fails to describe Prud'hon's relationship with a modern audience. In particular Laveissière fails to address the importance of Prud'hon's works today, and the problem of how twentieth century viewers and beyond relate to the allegory.²³ My thesis, too, is a reflection of recent scholarships' fascination with the allegory. However, while I am concerned with providing meaning and influences behind Prud'hon's allegory, unlike other writers I am also concerned with what his allegories mean to a modern audience.

What is important about these sources is how they view Prud'hon and his works. Precisely because there is very little scholarship, many of these writers, particularly the nineteenth century ones, tend to be admirers of Prud'hon's work, and therefore lack the

²³ This is perhaps a reflection on the fact that Prud'hon is only just being rehabilitated - Laveissière's book being published before the retrospective exhibition that would have provided crucial audience response to Prud'hon's work.

necessary distance to provide an unbiased view. This is especially evident in Voiart's work, because Voiart was a friend of Prud'hon. I have instead chosen to offer criticism on Prud'hon's use of allegory in relation to the problems stated by writers such as Diderot, Du Bos and Lessing. Their concerns about the use of allegory have not been applied by other scholars to Prud'hon's work.

Chapter One

The *Académie Royale*

The *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* was an institution crucial to the French artistic world. Established in 1648, the *Académie* had a rigid structure consisting of fifty officers, fifty Academicians and forty *agrées*, as well as a long established teaching regimen.¹ By 1667 the Salon was instituted as a regular exhibition place for those who exemplified the Academic painting style. The *Académie* instructed promising young artists through the *École des Beaux Arts*, also founded in 1648. Students at the *École des Beaux Arts* were expected to follow the classical example by copying from antique sculpture, from the 'old masters', as well as producing life drawing and figures of expression. To reinforce the supremacy of the classical ideal, the *Prix de Rome* competition was established in 1666 by the court painter, Charles Le Brun, with the winning artist awarded four years of study in Rome.² In the eighteenth century, the *Prix de Rome* was still a coveted prize, and interest in the classical past was high as a result of the discoveries of the ancient sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii.³ The winner was

¹ Philip Conisbee, *Painting in Eighteenth Century France*, Oxford, Phaidon, 1981, p. 11.

² Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Regime*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 31. Some regional Academies had their own *Prix de Rome* separate from the *Académie Royale* – Prud'hon won the Burgundy *Académie*'s *Prix de Rome*.

³ Herculaneum was discovered in 1738, Pompeii in 1748. Hugh Honour, *Neoclassicism*, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1968, p. 43. By 1750 *pensionnaires* were given funds to travel outside of Rome. Conisbee, p. 19.

expected to produce works to send back to France and was also then bound by an *agrément* to exhibit at the Salon.⁴

The *Académie* not only promoted the classical ideal, but also supported the hierarchy of the genres formalised by André Félibien, who ranked history painting as the supreme form of painting, followed by portraiture, genre painting, then the lowly landscape painting and still-life.⁵ His justification for this was that ‘celuy qui se rend l’imitateur de Dieu en peignant des figures humaines, est beaucoup plus excellent que tous les autres’ – because they are replicating God’s design.⁶ This idea was supported by the director of the *Académie* in the 1720s, Antoine Coypel, who believed one could only become a painter of the first order by painting historical subjects, as ‘the history painter alone is the painter of the soul’.⁷ The hierarchy was also reinforced by the monarchy, which, by 1775, was requesting at least four historical works each year.⁸ However, outside the *Académie*, genre paintings, one of the lower forms in the hierarchy, outsold history painting.⁹

⁴ Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution 1750-1800*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1987, p. 14. Conisbee notes *pensionnaires* were required to send back two to three studies by old masters, a nude study and a passion study. Conisbee, p. 19. In order to become a member of the *Académie*, an artist had to provide a *morceau de réception* (reception piece) and be officially *reçu* (received). Examples of reception pieces include Greuze’s ill received *Septimius Severus Reproaching Caracalla*, as well as Vigée LeBrun’s *Peace Bringing Back Abundance*.

⁵ Although he was not the inventor of the hierarchy of the genres.

⁶ Félibien quoted in Marc Sandoz, ‘Destin de la Peinture d’Histoire Pendant la Revolution qu’est-ce que la Peinture d’Histoire’, *L’Art et Les Révolutions, Section I: L’Art au Temps de la Révolution Française*, 27th International Congress of Art History, 1989, Strasbourg, Société Alsacienne pour le Développement de l’Histoire de l’Art, p. 99.

⁷ Antoine Coypel, ‘On the Aesthetic of a Painter’, 1721, *Art in Theory 1645-1815*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, p. 336.

⁸ Michael Greenhalgh, *The Classical Tradition in Art*, London, Gerald Duckworth Co. Ltd., 1978, p. 205.

⁹ The percentage of history paintings sold between 1757 and 1776 dropped to thirty-four percent in comparison to fifty-two percent between 1732 and 1756. Harrison C. and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Changes in the French Painting World*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 34. This is perhaps a reflection of the art market changing to reflect the taste of the new buyers – the middle class.

Despite the *Académie*'s dominant position in artistic circles, it also had its detractors. Denis Diderot, the foremost Salon critic of the eighteenth century, criticised the *Académie*'s teachings, saying 'you will not learn to understand the general harmony of movements at the *Académie*'.¹⁰ These criticisms, added to the changing political values of France, ultimately helped lead to the *Académie*'s collapse. After the Revolution, the *Académie* was associated with the monarchy, and artists spoke of their 'regret that they [the artists] are still enslaved by ministerial power and hemmed in by the *Académie Regime*, a despotic and absurd regime'.¹¹ Part of this dissatisfaction stemmed from the now old fashioned hierarchy. Those who exhibited at the Salon were ranked not by talent, but by their position within the *Académie*: highly ranked were First Painter to the King, then Rector, Assistant Rector, Professors, Academicians and finally *Agréés*.¹² Despite Diderot's criticism of the *Académie*, only twelve percent of (male) artists between 1785 and 1794 attended the *École des Beaux Arts*.¹³ By 1793, the *Académie* was shut down by Jacques-Louis David, and re-branded as the *Institut*.¹⁴ The Revolution's dislike of 'elitist' institutions curiously had the opposite effect on artists – in the period 1795 to 1804, the number of artists training at the *Académie* doubled.¹⁵ The *Académie* continued its dominance through the Napoleonic era, but its power waned under the Restoration, because despite the decline of classicism, the *Académie* did not adapt to new tastes.

¹⁰ Diderot 'Essays on Painting', 1766, *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750-1850: An Anthology of Documents*, p. 58.

¹¹ Anonymous source, David O'Brien, *After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoleon*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University, 2006, p. 1.

¹² The First Painter to the King was always a history painter. Jean Seznac, 'Diderot and History Painting', *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, Earl R. Wasserman (ed.), Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1965, p. 129.

¹³ White, p. 43.

¹⁴ It later returned as the *Académie* post- empire.

¹⁵ White, p. 43.

Artistic Styles

The Rococo

The predominant artistic style during the first half of the eighteenth century was the Rococo. The word Rococo is derived from *rocaille*, referring to stone and shell decorations which were popular in this style.¹⁶ Rococo art is based on appealing to the senses: pastel colours, decorativeness, curves rather than straight lines, organic shapes, and most importantly, amorous and playful subject matter. The Rococo can be divided into three different periods. The first generation Rococo occurred from 1715-23, essentially the period of the Regency following the death of Louis XIV.¹⁷ The leading artist during this time, Antoine Watteau, was known for his new genre of painting, the *fête galante*, exemplified by *Embarkation at Cythera* (Figure 1).¹⁸ Rococo art in this period was theatrical, amorous, but still modest. Watteau's *Embarkation at Cythera* embodies romantic love rather than erotic love, with tender vignettes of couples enjoying an outing. The second phase of the Rococo was dominated by the court painter, François Boucher, under Louis XV.¹⁹ Boucher made the Rococo style much more erotic and voyeuristic with such paintings as *Diana Leaving her Bath* and *The Toilette of Venus*.²⁰ However, these paintings retained at least a vestige of classical subject matter in order to

¹⁶ Helmut Hatzfield, *Rococo: Eroticism, Wit and Elegance in European Literature*, New York, Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1972, p. 3. However referring to this style as Rococo did not come about until 1842, Ibid., p.4.

¹⁷ Because Louis XV was too young to take the throne, Philippe d'Orleans, acted as Regent.

¹⁸ Antoine Watteau, *Embarkation at Cythera*, 1717, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹⁹ Hatzfield, p. 23.

²⁰ François Boucher, *Diana Leaving her Bath*, 1742, Louvre, oil on canvas; Boucher, *The Toilette of Venus*, 1749, Louvre, oil on canvas.

make them acceptable. Those within the court circle chose painters such as Boucher and Nattier to paint flattering portraits in the guise of hero, god or goddess – for example Jean-Marc Nattier's *Duchess de Chaulnes Represented as Hebe*.²¹ However, even before Louis XVI acceded to the throne, some dissatisfaction was apparent with the Rococo style. The last period of Rococo art was even more blatantly sexual than the period preceding it.²² Diderot complained about the lack of edifying subject matter and attacked the leading artist of the day, Boucher, saying:

There's such a confusion of objects piled one on top of the other, so poorly disposed...that we're dealing not so much with the pictures of a rational being as with the dreams of a madman.... I'd say the ideas of delicacy, forthrightness, innocence and simplicity have become almost foreign to him.²³

Diderot believed that, above all else, art should have a moral component, which was lacking in the Rococo subject matter. The artists he admired the most were Jean-Baptiste Greuze, a genre painter, for his moral subjects, and Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, a still-life artist, for whom Diderot disregarded the hierarchy of genres. He advised artists that compositions 'should be simple and clear.... [with] no pointless figures, no superfluous accessories' – a charge that would later be taken up by Neoclassical artists.²⁴ For Diderot, the purpose of all forms of art was to 'rendre la vertu aimable, le vice odieux, le ridicule saillant, voilà le projet de tout honnête homme qui prend la plume, le pinceau ou le ciseau'.²⁵ This did not mean that artists such as Greuze gave up on all Rococo qualities. Eroticism still played a large part in Greuze's work, an example being *The Broken Jug*

²¹ Jean Marc Nattier, *Duchess de Chaulnes Represented as Hebe*, 1744, Louvre, oil on canvas.

²² Hatzfield, p. 24.

²³ Denis Diderot, John Goodman (trans.), *Diderot on Art I: The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995, p. 23.

²⁴ Diderot, Goodman (trans.), *Notes on Painting*, p. 220.

²⁵ Diderot 'Essais' in Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980, p. 80.

(Figure 2), which depicts a young girl with her breast bared, cradling the flowers from the broken jug.²⁶ However, rather than an empty, purely erotic painting, Greuze is using the broken jug as a symbol of the loss of the girl's innocence. The sexual elements are justified as they ostensibly convey a moral message. Furthermore, there was a new emphasis on the ability of art to engage the attention of the public.²⁷ The typical Rococo painting appealed to the senses rather than the mind. Artists such as Chardin and Greuze could captivate a viewer through their truthfulness, their depiction of everyday life. This was in conflict with the Rococo style, for 'ni le grand siècle ni le grand roi n'avaient aimé la vérité dans l'art'.²⁸ Artists such as Chardin and Greuze also appealed to the growing middle classes, with their domestic ideals and harmony in family life.²⁹ The middle class could relate to works such as Chardin's *A Lady Taking Her Tea*, rather than the elite mythology-based works of the court painters. Towards the mid-eighteenth century the Rococo style began to decline in popularity and in 1775, on the orders of Louis XVI, the Superintendent of the Arts banned 'immoral' painting from the Salon.³⁰ The government also showed its support for the anti-Rococo movement by paying painters more for a history painting, than for portraits.³¹ The growing belief in the immorality of the Rococo art was accompanied by political unrest. The lavishness of the Rococo style reflected the rich lifestyles of the aristocracy, and as the power of the monarchy declined, so did the popularity of the Rococo, leading to the development of Neoclassicism, an art movement that was expected to regenerate moral values.

²⁶ Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The Broken Jug*, 1785, Louvre, oil on canvas.

²⁷ Fried, p. 92.

²⁸ Edmond and Jules Goncourt, *L'Art du Dix-huitième Siècle*, Paris, Hermann, 1967, p. 93.

²⁹ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 22.

³⁰ Seznac, 'Diderot and Historical Painting', *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 135.

³¹ Fried, p. 71.

The Development of Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism not only developed from political instability, but also from Enlightenment ideas. These two movements complemented each other, for 'the aesthetic discourse of Neoclassicism was the visual equivalent of the rational principles declared by the partisans of the Enlightenment'.³² The Enlightenment philosophy encouraged a growing interest in the classical past, as well as new ideas regarding science and the arts.³³ This movement's main motto was rationalism, belief in ideas rather than following traditional elements such as religion. This was reflected in the declining popularity of religious tracts in favour of scientific ones.³⁴ The Enlightenment became critical for the development of the arts, as arts were now seen as an intellectual pursuit.³⁵ The Enlightenment movement produced critical theorists, such as Johannes Winckelmann (1717-1768), who published his *History of Ancient Art* in 1764. Winckelmann, a librarian and secretary to Cardinal Albani, believed in the supremacy of classical art, particularly that from Greece, despite never actually going there.³⁶ Classical art had the appeal of 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur', as well as the ability to inspire morality: 'through a beautiful body, I discovered a soul fashioned for virtue'.³⁷ Winckelmann's ideas were influential; as German author Johann Goethe said 'we learn nothing by reading Winckelmann, but we become something'.³⁸ Winckelmann's writings increased interest in the classical past, as did archaeological discoveries at Pompeii and more scholarship was being produced on

³² Boime, *Revolution*, p. 391.

³³ Scholars cannot agree on a fixed date for the Enlightenment.

³⁴ John Sweetman, *The Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution 1700-1850*, Harlow, Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., 1998, p. 49.

³⁵ Greenhalgh, p. 12.

³⁶ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 71.

³⁷ Winckelmann in Mario Praz, *On Neoclassicism*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1969, p. 87.

³⁸ Honour, p. 43.

the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome, such as, Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1777).³⁹ Rome became the essential stop for young aristocrats on their Grand Tour, with the young travellers reaffirming this Neoclassical trend by having their portraits painted by the leading portraitist, Pompeo Batoni. Batoni would depict the travellers among the classical ruins they had come to see, as a kind of souvenir to take home. His *Portrait of Thomas Dundas* is a prime example of these types of portraits.⁴⁰ The artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Vedute di Roma* were also popular types of souvenirs for these travellers, who could take home with them engravings of the ancient Roman ruins.⁴¹ Rome was also considered a crucial place for artistic education and as France had a number of *pensionnaires*, the winners of the *Prix de Rome*, in Rome, the French *Académie* in Rome was established there for them.⁴² The widespread influence of classical art and literature meant Neoclassicism developed simultaneously across Europe, not just in painting, but in sculpture, architecture and the decorative arts, as well.⁴³

Despite the increased awareness of the classical past, the simplicity Winckelmann encouraged diffused slowly through France. The Rococo style dominated the French artistic world, largely due to the favour of important individuals in the French court, notably Madame du Pompadour. However, a new generation of artists took up Winckelmann's challenge, in particular David with *The Oath of the Horatii* (Figure 3) in

³⁹ In addition, notable individuals, such as Lord Hamilton, began establishing their own collections of ancient art.

⁴⁰ Pompeo Batoni, *Portrait of Thomas Dundas*, 1764, Marquess of Zetland Collection, oil on canvas.

⁴¹ As well as views of contemporary architecture.

⁴² Marc Jordan, 'Paris, Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture', In *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, edited by Hugh Brigstocke. *Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t118/e1966>, accessed 4.12.09.

⁴³ Greenhalgh, p. 197.

1784. The changes in artistic style were significant with many artists embracing the patriotic fervour associated with the new style with particular zeal. Firstly, David looked to the past for inspiration, and did not align his characters with any contemporary figures, as was the norm with the Rococo. His heroes were those of the Roman Republic, the Horatii brothers, who won Rome's freedom through a duel to the death against the Curatii.⁴⁴ The harsh straight lines of the brothers' arms are echoed in the swords, emphasising the main action of the painting. David also simplified his painting down to the basic elements, so that the narrative became clearer. Asymmetry and over decoration, features of the Rococo, gave way to simplicity and symmetry, evident in the balanced composition, with the three brothers echoed by the three columns. David's figures did not express themselves through facial expression, but rather through gesture, or corporality, an idea encouraged by Diderot.⁴⁵ One of the key ideas of Neoclassicism was that of morality, partly inspired by notables such as Diderot and Rousseau. Rousseau, in particular, believed art had become morally degenerate and that it 'owes its birth to our vices'.⁴⁶ This 'dissolution of morals' came from 'the necessary consequence of luxury, [which] brings with it in its turn the corruption of taste'.⁴⁷ Neoclassicism was idealistically a solution to the dissolute nature of the Rococo style and the problems Rousseau associated with this kind of art. Neoclassicism would 'speak to us always [of]

⁴⁴ David took this episode from Livy's *History of Rome*, and the story had recently been retold in Corneille's play, *Les Horaces*.

⁴⁵ See Dorothy Johnson's 'Corporality and Communication: The Gestural Revolution of Diderot, David and the Oath of the Horatii', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 71, No. 1, March, 1989, pp. 92-113.

⁴⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Arts and Sciences', 1749, *Art in Theory 1648-1815*, p. 437.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

the love of country, of humanity and virtue'.⁴⁸ During the Revolution, David took up the cause of morality in art and suggested this solution:

Antiquity has never ceased to be the great school for modern painters, the source of the beauties of their art. We seek to imitate the ancients in the genius of their conceptions [...] can we not take this one step further, and imitate them also in their morals and the institutions established by them in order to bring the arts to a state of perfection?⁴⁹

Although completed before the Revolution, *The Oath of the Horatii* was re-read as a sign of the new France: the heroism of liberty, equality and fraternity, inspired by the ideals of the past. David and his school produced a style that Rosenblum describes as 'Neo-classic Stoic'.⁵⁰ Neoclassical Stoic style relied on the *exemplum virtus*: using paragons of virtue such as mourning widows to inspire the people.⁵¹ David led the way with the message of self-sacrifice in his 1789 work, *The Lictors Bringing Back to Brutus the Bodies of His Sons*. The Neoclassical Stoic also followed the ideas promoted by Winckelmann and Lessing, of expression through the body, rather than the face.

Another key element of Neoclassicism was simplicity, a reaction to the luxury of the monarchy. In a society where equality was now idealised, lavish spending, generally seen as an attempt to make oneself stand out from the crowd, was not appreciated. Frugality and generosity were immortalised in painting, an example being Louis Gauffier's *Generosity of Roman Women*, which depicts a moment from ancient Rome, where Roman matrons donated their jewels to the government. This gesture was repeated in

⁴⁸ Gazat, 'Preliminary Statement to the Official Catalogue of the Salon of 1793', *Art in Theory 1648-1815: an Anthology of Changing Ideas*, p. 720.

⁴⁹ Jacques Louis David, 'The Painting of the Sabines', 1799, *Art in Theory 1648-1815*, pp. 1120-1121.

⁵⁰ Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 28.

⁵¹ Ibid.

1789 by some artists' wives, who donated their jewels to the Republican cause.⁵² Marat, made a martyr after his assassination, was praised by David because 'he could have possessed riches, if he had not preferred virtue to wealth'.⁵³ Neoclassicism became the antidote to the Rococo, depicting rationalism as opposed to Rococo's irrationalism.

However, Neoclassicism was not a slavish imitation of the classical past and artists such as David strove to emulate the morals and virtues of the past, rather than the art itself.⁵⁴ In particular, Greek art was mainly concerned with depicting beauty and the Greeks believed that the ideal beauty was portrayed by the form of a young man, exemplified by the kouros. This was noted by Stendhal - 'the Greeks respected all physical force, while we seek feeling and intelligence'.⁵⁵ This highlights the fact that virtues were of equal, if not greater, concern than aesthetics. Neoclassicism was meant to induce thought, admiration and moral values, states which were derived from the ideals promoted by the Enlightenment. Arguably, Neoclassicism reached its heights in France because of the political situation there, but according to Honour, the Neoclassical movement was extremely short-lived and was waning by Napoleon's time.⁵⁶ Certainly by the time of the Restoration Neoclassicism was declining in popularity, making way for Romanticism.

⁵² Boime, *Revolution*, p. 471.

⁵³ David quoted in David Irwin, *Neoclassicism*, London, Phaidon Press Ltd., 1997, p. 252.

⁵⁴ David's school was the dominant authority in Neoclassical art during the Republic and Empire; however antagonism towards David's influence meant several Neoclassical offshoots were established, in particular *les Barbus* or 'the bearded ones'. *Les Barbus* preferred a more primitive form of classicism and used *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* as subject matter.

⁵⁵ Marie-Henri Beyle Stendhal, 'Salon of 1824', *Art in Theory: 1815- 1900*, p. 36.

⁵⁶ Honour, p. 14.

Artistic Conditions

The Decline of the Monarchy

At the same time that changes were occurring in the arts, the politics of France were also being transformed. Louis XVI acceded to the throne in 1774, inheriting a country defeated in the Seven Years War, in which France lost most of its colonies to the English.⁵⁷ There were also increasing internal dilemmas. The lavish spending of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, as well as the costly support for American independence, helped damage the reputation of the monarchy. France could not afford these extravagances; along with the huge increase in population from eight million in 1715 to twenty-six million in 1789.⁵⁸ France was organised into three estates: the first, the clergy; second the aristocracy and the third, the peasants. Landowners (the first and second estates) held the majority of the wealth and were largely exempt from taxation, which could have addressed issues arising from overpopulation.⁵⁹ By 1788, France was essentially bankrupt, causing unemployment which in turn led to famine and poverty.⁶⁰ In February 1789, abbé Sieyès published the pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?* a criticism of the aristocracy, which emphasised the importance of the third estate in governance.⁶¹ This work, combined with food shortages, which led to riots, helped inflame the tensions in France, with the Third Estate threatening to revolt.⁶²

⁵⁷ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 173.

⁵⁸ Sweetman, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Alistair Horne, *The French Revolution*, London, Carlton Publishing Group, 2009, p. 15. The First Estate represented one percent of the population, the Second Estate, two to five percent but owned twenty percent of the land, with ninety four percent of the population making up the Third Estate.

⁶⁰ Alan Wintermute (ed.), *1789: French Art During the Revolution*, New York, Colnaghi, 1789, p. 65.

⁶¹ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 419.

⁶² Ibid.

The Revolution

On July 14, 1789, the storming of the Bastille signalled the beginning of the French Revolution. While Louis XVI remained King until 1793, his power was curtailed and the National Assembly was formed.⁶³ In 1789 church property was sold off, and in 1790 hereditary titles were abolished.⁶⁴ This had an adverse effect on those artisans such as goldsmiths and those in the porcelain trade that worked primarily for the luxury art market.⁶⁵ A second revolution occurred in 1792 when the King was officially dethroned.⁶⁶ At that time France was also at war with Austria and Prussia, requiring a declaration of a state of emergency, with forced conscription for male citizens.⁶⁷ More citizens wanted a complete overthrow of the monarchy, and inaction by the government caused an attack on the Tuileries Palace.⁶⁸ Each of these crises moved France further away from the possibility of a constitutional monarchy. Louis XVI's death warrant was signed and, in 1793, he was executed, followed by Marie-Antoinette. Religious holidays were abolished, and a new calendar was put in place the same year, as the new government obliterated any trace of the past.⁶⁹ While this period of turmoil was fruitful in providing artists with plenty of subject matter, the traditional order of an artist's tutelage changed. Rome, the Mecca for artists, became dangerous for some. Anti-French sentiment spread because of the large number of French émigrés choosing Rome as their

⁶³ Malcolm Crook, *Revolutionary France 1788-1880*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 222.

⁶⁴ Wintermute, pp. 65-67.

⁶⁵ Timothy Wilson Smith, *Napoleon and His Artists*, London, Constable and Co. Ltd., 1996, p. 15.

⁶⁶ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 443.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 444.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 445.

⁶⁹ Wilson Smith, p. 9.

new home, and because of Italian disapproval of the overthrow of the monarchy.⁷⁰ Some artists chose to withdraw completely from France, in particular Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun and Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy Trioson, both of whom had close associations with the monarchy.⁷¹ Other artists such as David and Prud'hon chose to become actively involved in the Revolution. David, a Jacobin, signed the death warrant for the King, while Prud'hon, a member of the *Commune des Arts*, donated some of his art works to the Committee of Public Education.

The Revolution was also significant in the emergence of a new class of political power. From 1792, the bourgeois became a political force to be reckoned with and this new class was now one of the main patrons of the art market.⁷² The bourgeois who often admitted to having poor taste, allowed more artistic freedom.⁷³ They became purchasers of national property that had been confiscated from the church and aristocracy during the Revolution.⁷⁴ Buying art evolved into a form of investment, as well as being a measure of wealth and status, and by the time of the French Revolution, the number of picture dealers had increased.⁷⁵ A leading dealer, Jean Baptiste Pierre Le Brun, encouraged picture dealing – ‘by buying pictures we can be sure of agreeable and valuable possessions, and we can enjoy the advantage that the civilised person always seeks, of

⁷⁰ For example, Madame Vigée Le Brun as an émigré spent time in Rome. Ibid., p. 71 In particular many religious officials went to Rome with the closure of churches in 1794. Sandoz, p. 104.

⁷¹ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 447. Girodet was titled and was forced to give up his feudal rights. He left for Rome in 1790 after winning the *Prix de Rome*, but stayed away from France for five years.

⁷² Richard Wrigley, ‘The Class of ’89. Cultural Aspects of Bourgeois Identity in France in the Aftermath of the French Revolution’, *Art in Bourgeois Society 1790-1850*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 134.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 136.

⁷⁴ Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Counter Revolution 1815-1848*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2004, p. 11.

⁷⁵ Conisbee, p. 29. Despite this, members of the *Académie* were banned from engaging in picture dealing.

both taking pleasure in and increasing his wealth'.⁷⁶ The bourgeois buyers were also partially responsible for the decline in religious art. Before the Revolution, the church was the main patron of religious art, but most of its power was lost in the ensuing years. Revolutionary and Republican governmental support of the arts was focused on promoting history painting, rather than religious art.⁷⁷ From the years 1785-1794, sixty-one percent of artists received official commissions. This meant a significant number of artists relied on external patronage. Therefore, the bourgeois were more important than ever to the survival of some artists, equalling the importance of governmental support.

The Republic

France officially became a republic on 22 September, 1792. The new Republic was concerned with re-establishing France's reputation by showing a pointed difference between the new France, and the one under the monarchy. Thanks to the ideas of Diderot and Winckelmann, morality was now strongly linked to art, and artists, such as David, now believed that looking to the past could regenerate the future. The new regime used art as a vehicle to promote its politics and goals. Neoclassicism associated itself with heroism, patriotism, self-sacrifice and virtue, while the monarchy was associated with suppression of morality and promotion of vice: 'tyrants, who fear the very image of virtues, had encouraged licentious mores'.⁷⁸ In 1793, Gazat, Minister of the Interior, called French artists 'to extinguish (vice) and to light instead the enthusiasm of generous

⁷⁶ Le Brun was the husband of Madame Vigée Le Brun, although they later divorced. Ibid., p. 29

⁷⁷ Conisbee, p. 41.

⁷⁸ Jacques-Louis David, 'The Jury of Art', 1793, *Art in Theory 1648-1815*, p.722.

and social values'.⁷⁹ One of the key ideas of Neoclassicism was the promotion of equality. On June 24 1793, constitutional rights had been granted to all citizens⁸⁰, and in the following year slavery was abolished.⁸¹ Equality became an important theme for artists; as Gazat now declared 'the public shall judge' rather than a jury.⁸² In 1795, the *Académie* was abolished and replaced with the *Institut*. In an attempt to move away from any associations with the *ancien regime* and to promote equality, the fine arts department was merged with the departments of literature and archaeology, hindering the independence and superiority the *Académie* once had.⁸³ The Republic established the *concours*, competitions for artists, to represent the most glorious events of the Revolution.⁸⁴ François de Neufchateau, in his 1799 address to the Salon jury, was exasperated by the lack of commitment by artists to depicting the Revolutionary cause for although 'the Revolution... has done everything for them, [they] have done almost nothing for it'.⁸⁵ Artists, however, could not rely on regular commissions, and without this money, they were forced to supplement their income by teaching, managing collections and selling rights to engravings.⁸⁶ Government commissions had dropped significantly with only forty-four percent of artists receiving them in the years 1795-

⁷⁹ Gazat, 'Preliminary Statement to the Official Catalogue of the Salon of 1793', 1793, *Art in Theory 1648-1815*, p. 720.

⁸⁰ Laveissière, p. 161.

⁸¹ Crook, p. 223.

⁸² Gazat 'Preliminary Statement', p. 721. However in 1793, David called for selected artists to be the deciding jury in competitions. Not surprisingly, one of his pupils won that first year. 'The Jury of Art' p.721.

⁸³ <http://www.academie-des-beaux-arts.fr/uk/histoire/index.html> (2/2/2010)

⁸⁴ Most of these *concours* still had a jury, however, there was a 'people's choice award' – if the crowd did not agree with the jury's decision, they would crown their own favourite with a laurel crown, O'Brien, p. 55.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸⁶ Conisbee, p. 76. In particular there was little government sponsorship during the Revolutionary period. O'Brien, p. 79.

1804, compared to sixty-three percent in 1785-1794.⁸⁷ Artists were also exasperated by the lack of change between the *concours* and previous Academic competitions. The *concours* still suffered from the familiar problems of corruption and bias, with judges being accused of picking a winner before even seeing the submissions.⁸⁸ This disappointing lack of change, however, could not dampen the idealism of some artists who fervently believed in the new government. Those who were particularly patriotic joined the *Commune des Arts*, a Jacobin group. Artists showed their support in their paintings, with examples being *The Tennis Court Oath* by David, and *The French Hercules*, by Philippe-Auguste Hennequin.⁸⁹ Despite this fervour, France was still politically unstable, with fighting between the Jacobin and Girondin factions.⁹⁰ The establishment of the Republic had also not resolved any of the food shortages, which caused ongoing riots.⁹¹ Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794) was given the task of bringing order back to France, but a brutal approach resulted in the Reign of Terror, where those who were considered a threat were executed publicly. In total, around forty thousand people were executed during the period of the Terror, with almost two thousand in the month of December 1793 alone.⁹² Public opinion turned against Robespierre who himself went to the guillotine.⁹³ Artists such as Prud'hon and Hennequin, members of the

⁸⁷ White, p. 48.

⁸⁸ David was accused in 1801 of swaying the judges to award his pupil Gros. O'Brien, p. 77.

⁸⁹ Jacques-Louis David, *The Tennis Court Oath*, 1791, Musée National du Château de Versailles, pen and brown ink sketch. Philippe-Auguste Hennequin, *The French Hercules*, 1800, Louvre, oil painting on ceiling. The French Hercules represents the power of the people of France, freed by the Republic.

⁹⁰ Horne, p. 42.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Horne, p. 42.

⁹³ Ibid.

Commune des Arts, were forced to flee the capital on Robespierre's fall from power, while David was imprisoned.⁹⁴

Artistic Conditions during the Empire

After his victory as a general at Arcole, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) emerged as a potential leader of France. In 1799, he had overthrown the French Directory and replaced it with his own consulate. By 1801, he was the sole consul of France, and by 1804, emperor. Napoleon led France to military victories in Egypt and Italy. He then carefully placed his own family members as leaders of the conquered countries or married them off into royal dynasties. Once again, artists were faced with the changes that come with new governance. Napoleon saw himself as a 'scientific' man, and had little use for the arts: however, he did realise what the arts could do for him. By carefully patronising the arts, Napoleon could control his public image. This was also an exciting time for artists, who now had the opportunity to represent France in a new era and according to Delacroix, the artistic possibilities of the Napoleonic era would never be surpassed: 'the life of Napoleon is our century's epic for all the arts'.⁹⁵ Napoleon only wanted the best artists and a list was compiled by the *Institut* in 1803, detailing the ten best painters (in order): Joseph-Marie Vien, David, Jean-Baptiste Regnault, Vincent, Greuze, Gérard, Girodet, Hennequin, Hue and Taunay.⁹⁶ As already stated, public commissions had reached an all time low in the Revolutionary decade. Napoleon sought artists worthy of depicting his deeds by holding *concours* and Jean Dominique Vivant Denon, best known as the director of the Louvre, organized competitions and commissioned works. Denon's aim

⁹⁴ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 472. Prud'hon left for the Haute Saône.

⁹⁵ Eugene Delacroix, in 1824, Wilson Smith, p. xxv.

⁹⁶ Laveissière, p. 22.

was to make French art 'the most impressive that there has ever been.... Everyone will place His Majesty's reign in the front rank in the arts, as it is in warfare, science and literature'.⁹⁷ Denon castigated the previous regime's *concours*, stating 'only ignoramus participate'.⁹⁸ To compel artists to produce art worthy of Napoleon, the *Prix Décennaux* was established. The prize was intended to be awarded every ten years, to commemorate Napoleon's rise to power.⁹⁹ Napoleon's interest in engaging artists meant sixty-seven percent of artists from the years 1805-1814 were receiving official commissions, the highest figure in twenty years.¹⁰⁰ Neoclassical works continued to dominate, but with new values, focusing on sacrifice (a result of the number of wars) and on Napoleon as the saviour of France.¹⁰¹ Napoleon himself preferred national themes rather than classical themes, and encouraged the growing interest in contemporary history painting, such as David's *Distribution of the Eagles* and Girodet's *Napoleon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo*.¹⁰² Napoleon was glorified in a number of compositions, for example Gros' *Pest-House at Jaffa* and Jean Pierre Franque's *Allegory of the Condition of France Before the Return From Egypt* (Figure 11).¹⁰³ Napoleon did not like allegory, but understood the uses of classical references.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Denon, referring to the 1808 Salon in Wilson Smith, p. 262.

⁹⁸ O'Brien, p. 93.

⁹⁹ Artists such as David, Prud'hon and Girodet competed for the prize awarded for memorable events in France's history. The prize only occurred once however, with Girodet's *The Deluge* taking out top prize beating David's *Coronation of Josephine*. Prud'hon's entry was *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*.

¹⁰⁰ White, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ Rosenblum, p.95.

¹⁰² Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism: 1800-1815*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1990, p. 12. Jacques-Louis David, *Distribution of the Eagles*, 1810, oil on canvas. Pierre Narcisse Guérin, *Napoleon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo*, 1808, oil on canvas.

¹⁰³ Antoine Jean Gros, *Pest-House at Jaffa*, 1804, Louvre, oil on canvas. Jean Pierre Franque, *Allegory of the Condition of France Before the Return From Egypt*, 1810, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹⁰⁴ He greatly admired the tales of Ossian by James McPherson, Celtic myths that were later found to be completely fabricated, Boime, p. 219. Some artists took to depicting the legends of Ossian as an alternative

Napoleon's reign also allowed the opportunity for the development of a relatively new genre: contemporary history painting. Napoleon's military campaigns were numerous, and painters accompanied him to provide 'official' records of the events. Gros in particular gained a name for himself as a battle painter, with major successes such as *Pest-House at Jaffa* and *The Battle of Eylau*.¹⁰⁵ However, the continuing wars made things difficult for artists. Between the years 1799-1805, two million men were conscripted, some of whom would have been artists. Those who were not conscripted were still affected, such as Prud'hon, whose son perished in the Russian campaign. Those who still exhibited also faced the problem of censorship. Although this was not as extreme as it was in the press, Lucien Bonaparte had the power to ban paintings 'recalling memories or exciting passions contrary to the principles of the government'.¹⁰⁶

Napoleon also brought innumerable treasures to France from his conquests of Europe and Egypt. Over five hundred artworks from Italy alone were brought back to the Louvre, later renamed Musée Napoleon in 1802.¹⁰⁷ Denon began to expand the Louvre's

to classicism, and Ossianic subjects particularly lent themselves to battle painting, for example Girodet's *Apotheosis of the Dead French Heroes*, which depicts France's war dead welcomed into the Ossian afterlife. Paintings such as Girodet's encouraged and bolstered the morale and hopes of soldiers and the French people – that despite great loss of life, soldiers who had the glory dying for their country would reap the rewards in the afterlife. Ossian mythology was 'pure' - it lacked the immoralities of classical mythology and it quickly gained a cult following, with Goethe saying 'Ossian has displaced Homer in my heart', Silvestra Bietoletti, *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1770-1840*, New York, Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 2009, p. 15. Ossian provided a modern counterpart to the ancient epics and this fascinated both the English and the French, usual sworn enemies. However, Ossian's works were a minor trend, and they still used the same classical visual imagery.

¹⁰⁵ Antoine Jean Gros, *Pest-House at Jaffa*, 1804, Louvre, oil on canvas, Gros, *The Battle of Eylau*, 1808, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹⁰⁶ Lucien Bonaparte in O'Brien, p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ Cecil Gould, *Trophy of Conquest: The Muse Napoleon and the Creation of the Louvre*, London, Faber and Faber, 1965, p. 128.

collections and the importance of the development of the Louvre cannot be understated, as many artists, including Prud'hon, had easy access to the museum, because they had studios there. Napoleon was also responsible for reviving the luxury goods industry. Because of the Revolution, and the fall of the monarchy, there was little demand for luxury items such as porcelain and silverware. However, the court of Napoleon had all the pomp of the monarchy, and this is evident in paintings such as David's *Coronation of Josephine*.¹⁰⁸ Napoleon raised the status of decorative arts, his commissions involving the co-operation of architects, artisans and artists alike.¹⁰⁹ However in 1811-12, a financial crisis once again forced cuts in the arts. Napoleon's solution was to force people to spend money, but despite this, plans were shelved to build a palace for the King of Rome in Paris, and modernize the capital.¹¹⁰ The last Napoleonic Salon was held in 1812 – two years later Napoleon was no longer in power. Napoleon's decline led to further changes for artists.

Artistic conditions in the Restoration

Napoleon was defeated in 1814 and exiled to Elba. He escaped the following year to regain power briefly in what is known as 'The Hundred Days', but was defeated at Waterloo and exiled to St. Helena. Louis XVIII became the new king of France. Napoleon's fall from power in 1814 and the restoration of the monarchy was a terrible blow to some artists, who were purged from the *Académie* due to their association with

¹⁰⁸ David, *Coronation of Josephine* 1806, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹⁰⁹ Wilson Smith, pp. 57 and 232.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

Napoleon.¹¹¹ David spent the rest of his life in exile and Gros committed suicide, believing he had shamed the Davidian cause. Other artists, such as Gérard, who had been a favoured painter under Napoleon, became First Painter to the new king.¹¹² The great collection of Italian antiquities also diminished as many were reclaimed by Canova acting as the Pope's emissary.¹¹³ The Congress of Vienna from 1814-1815 settled the distribution of Napoleonic territories and a new constitution was established. Certain Republican and Napoleonic charters remained, such as equality of the people, freedom of religion and many aspects of the Code Napoleon were kept.¹¹⁴ Although many artists were allowed to stay, the subject matter changed to glorifying the Bourbon monarchy or celebrating individuals from the monarchy's past.

The restoration of the Bourbons largely meant a return to the *status quo*. The Catholic Church was reinstated, meaning the return of religious painting, as well as painting to glorify the Bourbon family. The artists who worked both under Napoleon and the Restoration showed a marked return to almost Rococo-like painting. Girodet's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (Figure 4) features the soft pastels of the Rococo as well as a focus on a more feminine subject matter, something that was largely absent in the Revolutionary decades.¹¹⁵ Gros' *Bacchus and Ariadne* (Figure 5) is remarkable in that the man, who had made his name painting war scenes from Napoleonic victories, turned to classical mythology. In sharp contrast to Neoclassicism's highly masculine and line-based art,

¹¹¹ Boime, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 15. Those that had supported Napoleon during 'The Hundred Days' faced possible execution after a law was passed in 1815.

¹¹² Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 215.

¹¹³ However, the Louvre managed to keep quite a few important works, such as Veronese's *Feast at Cana*.

¹¹⁴ Boime, *Counter-Revolution*, p. 10.

¹¹⁵ Girodet, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1819, Louvre, oil on canvas. Except for, of course, Prud'hon.

Bacchus is slightly effeminate, with a soft face and a head of curls. Gros' work while still having a classical subject is very far removed from the Neoclassical ideal of reviving morality. The aesthetic beauty of the picture is more important than any moral message. Despite the decline in Neoclassicism, the Restoration revitalised a different type of history painting. The *genre anecdotique*, with scenes from medieval and early modern history, flourished, and the new government was wholly supportive of commissioning art works that celebrated France's past.¹¹⁶ However, these paintings were 'distinctly unheroic' and lacked the epic deeds represented in Napoleonic painting.¹¹⁷ Louis Hersent's *Louis XVI Distributing Alms to the Poor* (Figure 6) attempts to recapture some of the glory found in Napoleonic works, such as *Pest House at Jaffa*, but the crowd of villagers, obsequiously bowing and scraping gives an overwhelmingly false air.¹¹⁸ These contemporary history paintings were now preferred by the younger generation of artists rather than the classically infused history paintings of David's school. Artists who had worked in the Napoleonic era now found themselves almost undoing their work from previous years. Guérin, who had depicted Napoleon's triumph in *Napoleon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo*, found himself in this position.¹¹⁹ Following the Restoration, he painted portraits of the generals who fought against Napoleon, including his *Portrait of Henri de la Rochejaquelein* (Figure 7).¹²⁰ The enemy wisely is not depicted, with only the tips of their swords visible. However the hero of the painting is clear, with Rochejaquelein boldly standing in front of a white flag emblazoned with 'Le Roi'.

¹¹⁶ Though excluding the Revolution. O'Brien, p. 194.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Louis Hersent, *Louis XVI Distributing Alms to the Poor*, 1817, Musée National du Chateau Versailles, oil on canvas. Gros, 1804, *Pest House at Jaffa*, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹¹⁹ Guérin, *Napoleon Pardoning the Rebels at Cairo*, 1808, oil on canvas.

¹²⁰ Guérin, *Portrait of Henri de la Rochejaquelein*, 1817, Musée Municipal, Cholet, oil on canvas.

Overall, the Restoration was a confusing time for many artists. Many found themselves having to change style and subject to suit the new regime. Prud'hon, a leading allegorical painter during the Republic and Empire, now received commissions for religious works, something of which he had virtually no experience. The extreme change from the heroic actions and noble virtues of the preceding decades to the conventional religious art must have been a shock for many artists who perhaps felt their art now lacked the purpose that it had before.

**Figure 1. Jean-Antoine Watteau, *The Embarkation at Cythera*, 1717,
oil on canvas, 129 x 194 cm, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 2. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The Broken Jug*, 1785,
oil on canvas, 108.5 x 86.5 cm, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 3. Jacques-Louis David, *The Oath of the Horatii*, 1784,
330 x 425 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 4. Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1819,
253 x 202 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre,**

**Figure 5. Antoine-Jean Gros, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, c. 1821,
90.8 x 105.7 cm, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Canada**

**Figure 6. Louis Hersent, *Louis XVI Distributing Alms to the Poor*, 1817,
171 x 227 cm, oil on canvas, Musée National du Château, Versailles**

**Figure 7. Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *Portrait of Henri de la Rochejaquelein*, 1817,
216 x 142 cm, oil on canvas, Musée Municipal, Cholet**

Chapter Two

Definition of Allegory

The literal meaning of the word allegory is 'speaking otherwise than one means to speak'.¹ However, in terms of art practice, allegory is using visual symbols to indirectly represent another idea, often an abstract idea. K.H. Heydenreich describes allegory as 'a technique which the artist uses to communicate spiritual thoughts and abstract ideas by means of symbolic figures and other things, about the meaning of which one has made an agreement'.² Therefore, the allegorical tradition relies on both the artists and the viewers having a wide knowledge of artistic symbols and their associated meaning. Because of the complexity of interpreting allegory, it is often perceived as an elitist tradition. Thus associating allegory with a particular person or thing can be seen as a way of giving more meaning to that object, as well as raising the status of the artist, who can then be perceived as a well educated and knowledgeable person. Allegory is also used indirectly by an artist to show support for a political or moral doctrine. Hermeren defines seven different types of allegory. Firstly, the allegorical portrait aligns the sitter with a particular figure or virtue, perhaps by showing them in the guise of someone else.³ For example, Antonio Canova's sculpture of *Napoleon as Mars the Peace-maker*, suggests

¹ Goran Hermeren, *Representation and Meaning in the Visual Arts: A Study in the Methodology of Iconography*, Stockholm, Lund, 1969, p. 103.

² Ibid., p. 115.

³ Hermeren, p. 105.

Napoleon shares the same traits of power and strength as Mars.⁴ The second type of allegory is to use human form to represent geographical features such as rivers, cities and natural disasters. An example is Nicolas Coustou's sculpture *The Seine and the Marne*, which uses a man and woman to represent the two different rivers.⁵ These differ from other allegories in that the idea being represented is a concrete one, rather than abstract.⁶ The third type of allegory is that of personification, which uses a human being to portray an abstract idea, such as victory or peace.⁷ An example of this is Prud'hon's *Liberty* (Figure 22).⁸ The fourth type is the allegory of mental states.⁹ Prud'hon's *Man Between Virtue and Vice* is a development of the classical theme of The Choice of Hercules.¹⁰ The fifth type is the allegory of doctrine, which dictates a way of living, such as a religion.¹¹ The sixth type is mythological allegory, and the seventh, and last category, the allegory of events or situations.¹² An example of the last is Hennequin's *The Lyonnais Rebellion Put Down by the Genius of Liberty*.¹³

⁴ Antonio Canova, *Napoleon as Mars the Peace-maker*, 1806, Apsley House, London, marble.

⁵ Nicolas Coustou, *The Seine and The Marne*, 1712, Louvre, Marble.

⁶ Hermeren, p. 107.

⁷ Ibid., p. 108.

⁸ Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Liberty*, 1794, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, engraving.

⁹ Hermeren, p. 110.

¹⁰ Also known as *Reason Speaks, Pleasure Entraps*, 1796, Private collection, black and reddish brown chalk.

¹¹ Hermeren, p. 111.

¹² Ibid., pp. 112-113.

¹³ Hennequin, *The Lyonnais Rebellion Put Down by the Genius of Liberty*, 1794, Private Collection, oil on canvas.

The Origins of the Allegorical Tradition

The allegorical tradition emerged in ancient Greece and Rome, from epic poetry.¹⁴ The tradition spread to art, where personifications often became worshipped gods. These personifications went beyond symbolic representation, and often had a genealogy and an association with particular individuals or gods.¹⁵ The process of deification emerged in the ancient era, and in artistic representation, apotheosis scenes relied heavily on allegory.¹⁶ Personification could also be used to represent geographical features, natural phenomena and collective groups.¹⁷ For example, on Trajan's Column, the Danube River is represented by a large bearded man.¹⁸ The classical world also used allegory to depict triumphant events.¹⁹ The allegorical tradition continued through medieval and Renaissance Europe, to the Baroque and Neoclassical periods as seen in Anton-Raphael Mengs' *Allegory of History*.²⁰ In the sixteenth century, Cesare Ripa published his crucial text, the *Iconologia*, which recommended to artists how each personification should look. The use of allegory continued through the sixteenth into the seventeenth century, largely fuelled by the prevailing thought that history painting was the best form of art.²¹

¹⁴ H.A. Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art: The Representation of Abstract Concepts 600-400BC*, Zurich, Akanthus, 1993, p. 14.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ An example of this is the column base showing the Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, where the Campus Martius is represented by a male holding the famous horologium associated with that place. Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, c. 161 AD, Vatican, Marble.

¹⁷ The ten different types of personification are defined by Edmond Pottier and include: physical conditions, social gods, ethical and moral qualities, metaphysical ideas, geographical features, natural phenomena, products of earth, types of individuals, collective groups and social enjoyments. Shapiro, p. 26.

¹⁸ Trajan's Column, c. 113 AD, Rome, marble.

¹⁹ Roman and Greek allegorical representation differ in that Greeks for example would use the Centauromachy battle (between the Lapiths and The Centaurs) to represent a Greek victory over the Persians, rather than a direct reference to the battle.

²⁰ Antoine Raphael Mengs, *Allegory of History*, 1772, Museo Civico Bassano, oil on canvas.

²¹ This was reinforced by personalities such as Alberti in the fifteenth century and later by Felibien in the seventeenth century, who devised the hierarchy of genres. Rensselaer Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1967, pp. 17-18.

The similarities between poetry and painting emerged in ancient Rome, with the poet Horace who introduced the term *Ut Pictura Poesis* – generally understood to be ‘as in painting so is poetry’.²² Therefore, allegory, itself a tradition that emerged in poetry, is a form that lends itself both to the poet and the painter. Painting is a ‘mute poetry’ while poetry is ‘a speaking painting’.²³ Writers such as Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy reinforced this by stating ‘Painting and Poesy are two sisters, which are so like in all things that they mutually lend to each other both their Name and Office. One is call’d a dumb Poesy, and the other a speaking Picture’.²⁴ Antoine Coypel, one of the dominant French court painters of the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, advised artists that

A great painter must also be a poet... he should be filled with the same spirit that animates poetry, and he should be familiar with its rules and conventions for... these are the same that govern painting. Painting and poetry are sister arts, which resemble each other so closely in all things that they constantly lend each other mutual support. Painting should do for the eyes what poetry does for the ear, both have the same principles, the same ideas, the same object and the same enthusiasm.²⁵

Only by the mid eighteenth century, did the doctrine of *Ut Pictura Poesis* begin to be challenged.

²² Horace, *Ars Poetica* from *The “Ars Poetica” and its Tradition*, (trans. Leon Golden), Florida, Board of Regents of the State of Florida, 1995, p. 18, lines 361-65. This statement has been interpreted ‘as in painting so is poetry’, but is actually translated as: ‘poetry resembles painting. Some works will captivate you when you stand very close to them and others if you are at a greater distance’. So Horace is not actually saying the two are the same, rather that there is a resemblance.

²³ Simonides of Athens quoted in Gottheld Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, (1766) Baltimore, The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1962, p. 4.

²⁴ Charles-Alphonse du Fresnoy, from *De Arta Graphica* (1668) quoted in *Art in Theory: 1648-1815*, 2000, p. 159.

²⁵ Antoine Coypel ‘On the Aesthetic of the Painter’ (1721) from *Art in Theory: 1648-1815*, p. 336.

Eighteenth-Century Allegory

In their 1787-91 publication, Watelet and Levesque's *Dictionnaire des Arts de Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure*, described allegory as a tool of an artist 'pour faire naître et pour communiquer des pensées spirituelles, de personnages tirés des Mythologies, d'êtres imaginaires et d'objets convenus'.²⁶ Watelet and Levesque had a high opinion of allegory calling it 'un moyen ingénieux', 'le langage figuré ou abstrait a des charmes pour l'esprit cultivé et pour l'imagination'.²⁷ The idea of *Ut Pictura Poesis* was still a dominant idea among many critics and artists of the time. In France, this was particularly important, with the first French translation occurring in 1541.²⁸ Horace believed art should instruct as well as delight, and allegory provided a way for an artist to do both.²⁹ Watelet and Levesque reinforced this belief, stating it is easier for a poet to show allegory than for a painter: 'l'Artiste traite un sujet emprunté d'un Poëte, qui a lui-même employé ce langage dans son ouvrage'.³⁰ However, a poet is more able to depict allegory than a painter, because a poet can 'exposer ses fictions, les préparer, nommer les personnages épisodiques que son imagination adapte au sujet qu'il a choisi, et qu'il doit faire agir'.³¹ A poet is also able to please more people than a painter, because elements of the character, such as looks, can be left up to the imagination of the viewer. However, a painter must convey both the physical and mental aspects of characters, and is thus

²⁶ C.H Watelet and P.C. Levesque, *Dictionnaire des Arts de Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure*, Tome 1, Geneva, Minkoff Reprints, 1972, p. 51.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 51 and 54.

²⁸ Horace, p.163

²⁹ Greenhalgh, p. 12.

³⁰ Watelet, p. 53.

³¹ *Ibid.*

unable to please everybody.³² Pernety's *Dictionnaire Portatif de Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure* explains the definition of allegory, as he saw it in 1757: 'c'est lorsque pour signifier quelque chose, ou quelque passion, on emprunte des objets qui ne sont pas la chose même, mais qui la désignent si bien qu'on la devine au premier coup d'œil'.³³ In Pernety's opinion, for allegory to be successful, the idea must be recognized immediately in sight by using well known attributes.³⁴ He advises artists when painting a historical subject; it should not contain purely allegorical figures, but a mixture of the real and imaginary.³⁵ A moral subject, however, can be composed of pure allegory.³⁶

Winckelmann also promoted allegory as an appropriate substitute for religious paintings, in order to avoid clichés.³⁷ For an artist, the choice of allegorical subject was a shrewd career move. The hierarchy of the genres placed history painting first and recognised its painters as being the most talented and worthy. Allegorical paintings fit into this genre, with the painters having the benefits of this status, without actually committing to a full blown history painting.³⁸ Félibien, who promoted the hierarchy of the genres, wrote that a painter 'must be like the historians and represent great events or like the poets, subjects

³² Watelet, p. 51.

³³ Antoine-Joseph Pernety, 'Allégorique', *Dictionnaire Portatif de Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure*, Geneva, Minkoff Reprints, 1972, p. 8.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Pernety, p. 9.

³⁶ 'Quand il s'agit de faits historiques, le tableau ne doit être allégorique qu'en partie, c'est-à-dire qu'il contienne un mélange d'histoire réelle et de faits fabuleux. Un sujet galant, critique ou moral, peut être traité d'une manière purement allégorique'. Ibid.

³⁷ Laveissière, p. 14.

³⁸ Note Prud'hon's *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth* which earned him the title of history painter - see p. 117.

that will please and mounting still higher, to conceal under the veil of fable the virtues of great men, and the most exalted mysteries'.³⁹

Allegory in Crisis

The Enlightenment brought new ideas that began to change peoples' attitudes towards allegory. The allegorical tradition continued to be admired by certain critics; others began to challenge *Ut Pictura Poesis*, the essential basis of painting and allegory.⁴⁰ The critic, Abbé Du Bos, in his 1719 publication, *Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture*, refuted the idea of painting being akin to poetry. One of the reasons that Du Bos highlighted is content – poets are better able to represent particular stories because they have the ability to tell more than one episode:

Un Poëte peut nous dire beaucoup des choses qu'un Peintre ne sçauroit (sic) nous faire entendre. Un Poëte peut exprimer plusieurs de nos pensées et plusieurs de nos sentimens (sic) qu'un Peintre ne sçaurait (sic) rendre, parce que ni les uns ni les autres ne sont pas suivis d'aucun mouvement propre et spécialement marqué dans notre attitude, ni précisément caractérisé sur notre visage.⁴¹

A poet can express a feeling or emotion with words and the reader will understand. It is not so easy for a painter to capture that same feeling or emotion and ensure that the viewer will take the same meaning. As far as allegory is concerned Abbé Du Bos believes there are two types of allegories: pure allegories, and mixed allegories which use both

³⁹ Lee, p. 19.

⁴⁰ See Winckelmann above.

⁴¹ Abbé Du Bos, *Réflexion Critiques Sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture*, Première Partie. 6th edition, Paris, Chez Pissot, 1755, p. 78. I have chosen to quote the original spelling Du Bos uses. Please note that because of this, words may be in old fashioned French forms, or misspelled. For instance, Du Bos uses 'sçauroit' but in other versions is recorded as 'saurait'. I have chosen to leave in the original spelling, however for translation purposes only 'saurait' makes sense. Also note that Du Bos, spells 'sentimens' instead of 'sentiments'.

historical and allegorical figures.⁴² He is critical of pure allegories because 'il est presque impossible que dans les compositions de ce genre, ils puissent faire connaître distinctement leur sujet, et mettre toutes leurs idées à portée des spectateurs les plus intelligens'.⁴³ For Du Bos, allegory is acceptable in religious works, but in any other circumstances, the figures should be labelled as Raphael did in his works.⁴⁴ Du Bos also addresses the problem of communicating ideas in allegory:

Tous les personnages d'un tableau allégorique sont souvent muets pour les spectateurs dont l'imagination n'est point du même étage que celle du Peintre. Ce sens mystérieux est placé si haut, que personne n'y sçauroit atteindre.⁴⁵

Essentially, allegory can only be understood by the painter who made it, because the figures do not 'speak'. Furthermore, modern painters have invented more obscure allegories, making communication even harder.⁴⁶ Du Bos also believed painting should be truthful to nature because allegory depicts abstract concepts that do not physically exist.⁴⁷ For Du Bos, a successful painter used subject matter that would move the viewer in real life:

La plus grande imprudence que le Peintre ou le Poëte puissent faire, c'est de prendre pour l'objet principal de leur imitation des choses que nous regarderions avec indifférence dans la nature.... Comment serons-nous touchés par la copie d'un original incapable de nous affecter?⁴⁸

⁴² Ibid., p.186.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Du Bos, pp. 198, 178.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 193.

⁴⁶ Du Bos, p. 361 Du Bos notes that a poet can recount a little known story without much difficulty, p.97.

⁴⁷ Lee, p. 22.

⁴⁸ Du Bos, p. 49.

Because allegorical situations depicted in painting did not occur in real life, then by Du Bos standards, allegorical paintings would not be successful in moving the viewer. These paintings would only be interesting due to technique, rather than subject matter.⁴⁹

The problems of allegory and the doctrine of *Ut Pictura Poesis* were also taken up by critic Diderot, who, in his *Pensées Détachées sur la Peinture* wrote that 'le peintre n'a qu'un instant; et il ne lui est pas plus permis d'embrasser deux instants que deux actions'.⁵⁰ Like Du Bos, Diderot saw that the painter is at a disadvantage compared to the poet, because a painter cannot show more than one part of a story. For Diderot, the element of 'truth' in art became more important, specifically because the artificial and decadent nature of Rococo art depicted a world that the average person did not live in and could not relate to. Artists, such as Greuze and Chardin, were admired for their truth to nature, not only by Diderot, but by 'amateurs'.⁵¹ The rise of art criticism allowed more overt criticism of allegory. Diderot echoed Du Bos's sentiment of truth to nature, saying 'J'aime mieux l'histoire que les fictions'.⁵² This is the problem of allegory – essentially it is fiction, so the moral lessons that were claimed one could learn from allegory really originate from make believe. The Enlightenment advocated belief in what could be seen, touched and heard – an allegory does not fulfill any of these requirements. Diderot's other complaint was that 'l'allégorie, rarement sublime, est presque toujours froide et

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵⁰ Denis Diderot, 'Pensées Détachées sur la Peinture' in *Œuvres Esthétiques*, Paris, Garnier, 1965, p. 712.

⁵¹ Abbé Marc Antoine Lauger admires Chardin's *Philosopher Absorbed by his Reading* for its 'caractère est rendu avec beaucoup de vérité'. Fried, p. 11.

⁵² Diderot, *Oeuvres Esthétiques*, p. 762.

obscure'.⁵³ Allegory, which is using a known set figure to express an abstract idea, often lacks expression simply because the figure and its attributes are supposed to communicate the idea rather than the tools of an artist: colour, line, facial expression and movement. Allegory is essentially anti-painting because it does not rely on these traditional tools. Diderot also addresses the major problem of allegory – it is an elitist tradition that is specifically designed for those educated in classical literature and art. For Diderot

Une composition, qui doit être exposée aux yeux d'une foule de toutes sortes de spectateurs, sera vicieuse, si elle n'est pas intelligible pour un homme de bon sens tout court.⁵⁴

He goes even further, to say he will turn his back on a painting with an 'emblème, un logogriphe' because of the difficulty of understanding what is happening at one glance.⁵⁵

Diderot prefers the works of artists such as Greuze and Chardin, for while they still have moral messages similar to those in an allegory, they are communicable to all. However, supporters of the allegorical tradition were not unaware of its shortcomings. Watelet and Levesque advise that

l'allégorie soit employée avec réserve, que les figures qu'on y fait entrer soient faciles à reconnaître, même pour ceux qu'on suppose instruits; que leurs intentions se découvrent aisément et qu'elles n'embarrassent point les compositions.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid., p.766. Grimm also stated similarly that complex works like allegory are 'étonnement froid'. Friedrich Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance, Littéraire, Philosophique et Critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister*, Vol. 3, Paris, Garnier frères, 1877-82, p. 317.

⁵⁴ Diderot 'Essais', Fried, p. 90.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Watelet, p. 54.

Watelet and Levesque in part address some of the criticism that allegory is an elitist tradition. They argue that it is difficult to remain ignorant of the painting's message if completed by a truly talented artist, who imbues their work with imagination and spirit.⁵⁷

Lessing further elaborated on the problems of *Ut Pictura Poesis* and the ideas of Du Bos and Diderot in his 1766 treatise on the Laocoön. For Lessing, the long enduring belief that painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking painting, has 'engendered a mania for description' in poetry and in painting 'a mania for allegory'.⁵⁸ The result of this is that poetry becomes silent and inexpressive and painting is no longer painting because each medium is denying its true function.⁵⁹ Therefore the use of allegory in painting is an attempt by the painter to enter the realm of poetry. Lessing's idea that allegory is a tool of the poet is supported by the fact that allegory had its origins in ancient epic poetry.⁶⁰ Lessing also discussed the problems created by 'the single moment of time to which art must confine itself by virtue of its material limitations'.⁶¹ Furthermore, a poet has the greater ability to make a character appealing by traits alone: 'the whole infinite realm of perfection lies open to his description... often he ignores it entirely, being convinced that once his hero has won our favour his other qualities will either occupy us to such a point that we do not think of his physical form'.⁶² In contrast, the painter only has visual

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Lessing, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp.4-5.

⁶⁰ See p. 53.

⁶¹ Lessing, p. 19.

⁶² Ibid., p. 23. Du Bos writes similarly: 'Il est encore plus facile, sans comparaison, au Poëte qu'au Peintre de nous affectionner à ses personnages et de nous faire prendre un grand intérêt à leur destinée. Les qualités extérieures comme la beauté, la jeunesse, la majesté et la douceur que le Peintre peut donner à ces personnages, ne sauraient nous intéresser à leur destinée autant que les vertus et les qualités de l'âme que le Poëte peut donner aux siens'. Du Bos, p. 82.

qualities, rather than character, to make forms appealing to a viewer. Perhaps the most important statement made by Lessing about the state of *Ut Pictura Poesis* is that 'painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colours in space rather than articulated sounds in time'.⁶³ A poet must use the tools at his disposal: allusion and descriptive language while a painter uses colour, perspective and line. He goes on further to say that actions are in the realm of the poet while bodies are in that of the painter.⁶⁴ Each medium can borrow from the other, but it is limited – poetry can depict bodies, but only through action. Painting can show action, but only a single action, therefore the artist must choose the right moment.⁶⁵ In terms of emotion, Lessing, like Winckelmann, admires the art of the ancient Greeks, where 'rage and despair did not degrade any of their works'.⁶⁶ Expressing harsh emotions like anger in painting is ugly, whereas it is not in poetry.⁶⁷ Using the example of the Laocoön (Figure 8), Lessing explains the sacrifices artists must make.⁶⁸

The artist must give up this subordinate association of ideas if the main theme is not to suffer. Had he left Laocoön so much as the fillet he would have greatly weakened the expression, for the brow, the seat of expression, would have been partly covered. As in the case of the scream he sacrificed expression for beauty, here he gives up conventionality for expression.⁶⁹

Lessing is not refuting the importance *Ut Pictura Poesis*, nor criticising artists for following the poet, for this 'does not lessen their merit.... On the contrary, this imitation shows their wisdom in a most favourable light', as from a description they are able to use

⁶³ Lessing, p. 78.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

⁶⁵ Lessing, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁷ Lessing, p. 15. He gives the example of a 'wrathful Zeus' in poetry, who becomes a 'stern Zeus in painting'.

⁶⁸ Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus, *Laocoön*, c. 200 B.C., 184 cm, marble.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

their imagination to turn it into a painting. However Lessing finds it less credible that poets can be influenced by painting.⁷⁰

Part of this crisis facing historical and allegorical painting was the concept of original thought. Etienne La Font de Saint-Yenne, in his *Reflections on Some Causes of the Present State of Painting in France*, complains about the repetition of the same scenes.

Though history sacred and profane, along with fable, affords an almost infinite number of subjects, every day we see indolent authors, born to plagiary, restrict themselves to such as have been treated over and over again. Are they unaware that minds are swayed by novelty?⁷¹

Allegory is based on artistic precedent rather than originality. While La Font de Saint-Yenne was not advocating the avant-garde art found later in Romanticism, a lot of history paintings, including allegories, depicted the same over-used subject matter. Friedrich Melchior, the Baron von Grimm, had similar concerns, stating that less complex works were more difficult to achieve because they used greater invention and genius.⁷² Towards the end of the eighteenth century, writers such as Goethe also raised a new issue concerning allegory: the distinction between allegory and symbol. According to Winckelmann, allegory consists of symbols, but Goethe believed there was a primary difference between symbol and allegory. Allegory 'means a thing other than itself' whereas symbols 'really are what they represent'.⁷³

⁷⁰ Lessing, p. 40. He feels that an artist can reveal his influence from poetry in his work, but a poet must explicitly say he is referring to a painting.

⁷¹ Etienne La Font de Saint-Yenne, 'Reflections on Some Causes of the Present State of Painting in France' (1746) from *Art in Theory: 1648-1815*, p. 556.

⁷² Grimm, p. 317.

⁷³ Goethe in Gunnar Berfelt, 'On Symbol and Allegory', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1969, p. 202.

Pre-Revolutionary Allegory

Despite the growing criticism, allegory was still popular amongst the elite, who continued to have their allegorical portraits done. The ruling class have always been enamoured of allusions of their character to that of someone greater, from Nero's insistence that he be shown as Hercules, to Louis XIV's allusion to Apollo in his guise as 'the Sun King'. Allegorical portraits also provide legitimacy not only to the sitter, but also to their dynasty. More importantly just as the sun is crucial to life itself, Louis is making the statement that he, too, is crucial to the continued existence of France. The purpose of these allegorical portraits is to imbue the sitter with the traits and powers of the allusion. For instance, Louis XV, the successor of Louis XIV 'the Sun King', was painted by Boucher in *Rising of the Sun* and *Setting of the Sun*.⁷⁴ While Louis XV is not depicted in the paintings, the connotations from the previous allegories established under Louis XIV continue to be implicitly understood. Those in the court circle would also commission their own allegorical portraits, such as Nattier's portrait of *Madame Pompadour as Diana*, goddess of the hunt.⁷⁵ Allegories were also used to commemorate royal events, with examples such as Louis Lagrenée's *Allegory of the Death of the Dauphin* and François Lemoyne's *Louis XV Giving Peace to Europe*.⁷⁶ In the pre-Revolutionary era, allegory was exactly what Diderot claimed it to be: an elitist tradition, precisely because

⁷⁴ Boucher, *Rising of the Sun* and *Setting of the Sun*, 1753, Wallace Collection, London, oil on canvas. They were specifically commissioned for the King's bedroom.

⁷⁵ Nattier, *Madame Pompadour as Diana*, 1752, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, oil on canvas.

⁷⁶ Louis Lagrenée, *Allegory of the Death of the Dauphin*, 1767, Musée National de Fontainebleau, oil on canvas. François Lemoyne 1729, *Louis XV Giving Peace to Europe*, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et des Trianons, oil on canvas.

it was reserved for the elite. However the Revolution addressed this imbalance with allegorical painting that was now for everyone.

Allegory and the French Revolution

During the Revolutionary era, allegory became crucial to the establishment of a national identity. The cry of the Revolution: 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' is in itself an allegorical concept, thereby making allegorical paintings necessary to capture the *zeitgeist*. However, the position of allegory was uncertain in the transition period between the monarchy and the Revolution. Critics of allegory, such as Diderot, wrote: 'unless in an apotheosis or some other subject of pure phantasy, I can't bear the mixture of allegorical and real beings. The mixture of allegorical and real beings makes history seem like a fairytale'.⁷⁷ However, during the Revolution, this type of allegory detested by Diderot, became popular as a way to depict Revolutionary events. During these turbulent times, allegory was used to disguise economic and social woes.⁷⁸ By 1792, France had declared war on Austria, and Prussia had declared war on France.⁷⁹ Fighting between the Girondists and the Jacobins also threatened the stability of the government. Allegory, which had the ability to exalt dire situations, was a particularly good way to re-write history. One particular artist who used allegories to depict revolutionary events was Philippe-Auguste Hennequin (1762-1833), a student of David's, and one of the foremost allegorists during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. His allegory, with the self-explanatory title of *Philosophy Drawing aside the Clouds that Hid the Truth; the Triumph of the French People, or the 10th of August, a relative Allegory to this famous*

⁷⁷ Diderot, John Goodman (trans.), *Diderot on Art*, p. 223.

⁷⁸ Wintermute, p. 31.

⁷⁹ Crook, p. 222.

Day (Figure 9), symbolizes the overthrow of the monarchy arising from the riots at the Tuileries Palace.⁸⁰ Hennequin depicts the event using entirely allegorical classical figures – the only reference that allows the painting to be read as a piece of contemporary history is the writing ‘Au 10 Août’ at the bottom of the painting. The female figure of Truth holds a mirror shining light on Crime and to her left is Philosophy.⁸¹ By depicting a revolutionary event, ‘l’artiste a été à-la-fois Patriote et Peintre’.⁸² The violence of the event is completely masked by the allegorical figures, making it subject to the criticism that allegory is untruthful. Hennequin’s picture is countered by Gérard’s more realistic version of events, *The 10th August 1792*.⁸³ Benoit emphasizes that ‘l’allégorie apparut comme le symbole visuel d’une nouvelle religion instituée par la République’.⁸⁴ Liberty, patriotism, and most of all unity were the messages of these allegories. While allegory under the monarchy had been a way of separating the classes, now it united them in the Republic. This does not mean Lessing’s and Du Bos’s concerns were now considered invalid – rather that depicting virtue was more important than their concerns.

In 1794, a *concours* was arranged to depict revolutionary events, and the use of allegory was ideal to represent the charge given to painters.

The history of our Revolution can be divided into two principal categories.
The first will consist of those deeds which are the work of the entire

⁸⁰ Hennequin, *Philosophy Drawing aside the Clouds that Hid the Truth; the Triumph of the French People, or the 10th of August, a relative Allegory to this famous Day*, 1799, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, oil on canvas.

⁸¹ Note only half the painting still exists – Crime can now no longer be seen, nor Liberty.

⁸² Pierre Chaussard, referring to Hennequin’s *Triumph of the French People*, ‘Exhibition des ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture, Gravure, Dessins, Modèles, comprisés par les artistes vivans, et exposés dans le salon du Musée central des Arts, le 1^{er}, Fructidor an VII de la République’ *La Décade Philosophique*, 32 no. 34, August 27, 1799, p. 548.

⁸³ Gérard, *The 10th August 1792*, 1792, Louvre, pen and ink drawing.

⁸⁴ Jérémie Benoit, *Philippe-Auguste Hennequin 1762-1833*, Paris, Arthena, 1994, p. 43.

people, the second, the individuals. All the virtues, must in our Republic finally take the places of the vices which we have banished.⁸⁵

It seemed unlikely that allegory would continue to be popular in Revolutionary times owing to the associations of allegory with the monarchy. Forty years later, in 1799, there was similar criticism to that of Du Bos and Diderot, with Chaussard, a contemporary critic, describing the language of allegory as ‘toujours vague, incomplet, énigmatique et froid’.⁸⁶ He goes on to say that ‘l’allégorie étonne plus qu’elle ne plait’ and that it is anti-progressive because ‘l’allégorie date de cette époque où la Peinture était non pas une imitation de la Nature, mais un langage hiéroglyphique. Ainsi l’allégorie pure nous ramène au berceau de l’art.’⁸⁷ However, during the Revolutionary years, propaganda painting, such as Hennequin’s allegories were meant to stun rather than please. The object was not to produce a piece of art that one would buy to hang in one’s home, but rather be a national artwork that declares the values of the new France. The modern critic Benoit also notes that allegory had one major benefit – it was ‘un mode de peinture immédiatement perceptible’.⁸⁸ Allegory had the ability to be understood immediately through visual signs. The startling pace of the revolution meant there simply was not enough time to develop new ways of depiction. Artists relied on the established practices of art, but merely utilized them in a different way. For instance, the popularity of allegorical portraits – the focusing on one particular individual gave way in the Revolution to the allegory of doctrine with, for example the promotion of virtues such as

⁸⁵ Wintermute, p. 30.

⁸⁶ Pierre Chaussard, ‘Exhibition des ouvrages de Peinture’, p. 545.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 545-546.

⁸⁸ Benoit, p. 44.

patriotism.⁸⁹ The rights and importance of the French people as a whole were emphasized in these revolutionary allegorical compositions. An earlier work of Hennequin's, *The French Hercules* (Figure 10), shows Hercules, the representative of the French people, with Minerva, the representative of the National Assembly, crushing Crime – representing those who are counter-revolutionaries.⁹⁰ The power of this image cannot be underestimated. Allegory, rather than dividing the rich from the poor in the glorified portrait tradition, as it did during the Rococo era, is now uniting them.⁹¹ While the average person may not understand allegory, they could now be a part of it – it was no longer an elitist tradition in terms of whom it represented.

Napoleonic Allegory

The use of allegorical painting altered in Napoleonic times, moving to represent glorification of the individual, rather than that of an event or virtue. Jean Pierre Franque's *Allegory of the Condition of France Before the Return from Egypt* (Figure 11) makes it perfectly clear that Napoleon is the new hero of the allegory. France, represented as a bare-breasted woman, is held hostage by Blind Fury and Crime and she reaches out to Napoleon, who is separated from France by the sea, a pyramid in the background. Napoleon, the only contemporarily dressed figure in the painting, is presented as necessary to return order to France. With his return, he will restore the other allegorical figures represented: Plenty, Commerce, Law and Order.⁹² Antoine-Francois Callet painted the allegorical battle scenes, *Allegory of the Battle of Austerlitz* and *Allegory of*

⁸⁹ There are several exceptions, such as David's *Marat*.

⁹⁰ Hennequin, *The French Hercules*, 1800, Louvre, oil on ceiling. Benoit, p. 78.

⁹¹ This addresses some of the concerns previously mentioned - see p. 57.

⁹² Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism 1798-1836*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 76.

the Battle of Marengo, where Napoleon is still the focus, charging into battle resembling a young Alexander the Great.⁹³ The mixture of real and imaginary figures gives credence to the idea that Napoleon links the virtues and ideals of the classical past to the future. Despite the use of allegory in Napoleonic painting, Napoleon did not like allegory and its classical references. In David's *Distribution of the Eagles*, Napoleon told David to remove the allegorical figure of Liberty from the composition.⁹⁴ However, Napoleon recognized the importance of the tradition, as 'allegory is the artistic form appropriate to conquest because for both conqueror and allegorist, detail is of no importance' [rather the obvious signs of victory].⁹⁵ Napoleon, after all, did like to celebrate his victories and allegory was the perfect vehicle despite his dislike of the tradition. The Napoleonic era was rich in events that artists could depict allegorically, from military campaigns, such as Callet's *Allegory of the Battle of Marengo*, to treaties such as the Concordat of 1801, in Pierre-Joseph François' *Allegory of the Concordat*.⁹⁶ Subject matter also altered from depicting Republican heroes to showing more mythological subjects and this reflects Napoleon's wish to legitimise his reign by aligning himself with the gods of ancient mythology. Allegorical portraits with Napoleon's family in the guises of various gods were the trademark of Italian artists such as Canova, who depicted both Napoleon in *Napoleon as Mars the Peace-Maker*, and his sister in *Pauline Bonaparte as Venus*

⁹³ Callet, *Allegory of the Battle of Austerlitz*, c. 1800-1810, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, oil on canvas. Callet, *Allegory of the Battle of Marengo*, c. 1800-1810, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, oil on canvas.

⁹⁴ David, *Distribution of the Eagles*, 1810, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, oil on canvas.

⁹⁵ Bryson, p. 39.

⁹⁶ Callet's *Allegory of the Battle of Marengo*, c. 1800-1810, Versailles, oil on canvas. Pierre-Joseph François, *Allegory of the Concordat*, 1802, Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison et de Bois-Préau, oil painting, study. The Concordat of 1801 is the signing of an agreement between Napoleon and the Roman Catholic Church. It acknowledges that Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion of France, but still allowed the state most religious control.

Victorious.⁹⁷ Allegory, perhaps seen as more feminine, was popular with Napoleon's two wives, who commissioned several allegories from Prud'hon. The long awaited birth of an heir in 1811 provided an opportunity for artists to use allegory to glorify the new King of Rome.⁹⁸ The position of allegory during the Napoleonic era was more varied and complex than in the Republic. Artists during the Republic mainly focused their allegories on reflecting Republican virtues rather than specific individuals. With the rise of one powerful individual, Napoleon, came the re-emergence of the allegorical portrait, heightening the similarities between monarchical allegory and Napoleonic allegory. Decorative allegory also reappeared within the Napoleonic court, with the artist Prud'hon adding a feminine touch. However this contrasted with the masculine art in the public sphere, specifically allegorical battle paintings. Furthermore, the allegorical battle paintings were competing with contemporary depictions, such as those of Gros. This confusion over the realm of allegory perhaps played a part in its ultimate downfall.

Allegory in the Restoration

With the Restoration, allegorical compositions continued, and were now used to promote the return of the Bourbon monarchy. An example is the 1816 winner of the *Prix de Rome*, *Oenone Refusing to Heal Paris* (Figure 12) by Antoine-Jean Baptiste Thomas.⁹⁹ The painting is a subtle allegory, with Paris, wearing a Phrygian bonnet, representing the past.

⁹⁷ Canova, *Napoleon as Mars the Peace-Maker*, 1806, Apsley House, London, marble. Canova, *Pauline Bonaparte as Venus Victorious*, 1808, Gallery Borghese, Rome, marble.

⁹⁸ See p. 176.

⁹⁹ Antoine-Jean Baptiste Thomas, *Oenone Refusing to Heal Paris*, 1816, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris, oil on canvas.

Oenone, representing the Restoration, is denying reconciliation with France's revolutionary past. The Bourbons were also responsible for getting rid of allegories from past regimes, with Prud'hon's *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* removed from the Palais de Justice and replaced with a more appropriate religious work. However, the emergence of Romanticism, and later Realism, meant allegory was falling out of favour. In 1827 *Le Figaro* criticized the allegorical ceilings of the Musée D'Egypte saying,

Quant aux plafonds, les sujets sont froids, fades ou ridicules. C'est dans l'ordre. On devrait bien en finir [avec] ces Frances en manteau fleurdelis, avec ces arts tenant la palette ou la lyre, ces temples de la gloire, de la victoire, et toutes ces niaiseries flagorneries qu'imaginent des courtisans au cerveau rétréci: le règne des allégories est passé.¹⁰⁰

Gros, never a painter of allegory under Napoleon, was one of the painters chosen to paint nine allegorical ceilings, which included *Time Raising Truth to the Throne* and *The Genius of France Animating the Arts and Succouring Humanity*.¹⁰¹ Themes of victory were no longer appropriate, France had been defeated by Britain, and the Bourbons were back on the throne, albeit with a shaky hold. Neoclassicism's dominance began to wane, and with it went allegorical painting. Contemporary history paintings were now preferred, although amongst the Académie, classical traditions remained.¹⁰² Allegory was still preferred for formal commissions by such artistic institutions. However, the Académie, by still promoting classical traditions, was now seen as old fashioned.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Chaussard, 'Figaro au Salon. Les Nouvelles Salles – Exhibition de la rue du Gros Chenet' *Le Figaro*, 432, 18 December, 1827, p. 927.

¹⁰¹ Gros, *Time Raising Truth to the Throne*, 1827, Louvre, oil on canvas. Gros, *The Genius of France Animating the Arts and Succouring Humanity*, 1833, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹⁰² Other allegorical Louvre ceilings include Mauzaisse's *Time Displaying the Ruins that He Creates and the Masterpieces He Leaves to Discover*, 1821, Louvre, oil on canvas and Picot's *Study Crowned with Laurels and the Genius of the Arts Unveiling Ancient Egypt for Greece*, 1827, Louvre, oil on canvas.

The Decline of Allegory

The decline of allegory occurred in the mid nineteenth century, along with the decline of Neoclassicism. Allegory has always primarily been a tool of classical art, and without classicism, there was little need for allegory. Allegories have multiple layers of meaning and symbols, but literal interpretation became favoured, especially with the advent of Realism and Impressionism that show the importance of capturing the here and now. Allegory is also associated with the past, and the new styles, such as Realism and Impressionism were very much concerned with the depiction of modern life, as it really was.¹⁰³ As a result, many of the skills people had developed to 'read' paintings disappeared. Allegory, rather than the tool of a highly skilled painter, was considered 'didactic, mechanical, ugly, ineffective and barren'.¹⁰⁴ However, traditional ideas, such as *Ut Pictura Poesis* still had their place in nineteenth century society. An 1844 article on Prud'hon by Houssaye alleges that artists and poets have the same goal: 'la haute mission de réaliser cet autre monde qui nous console du premier'.¹⁰⁵ In other words, artists are supposed to show us the world we can not see – a world that can be realised with allegory.

¹⁰³ The notable exception, of course, is Courbet's *The Artist's Studio (A Real Allegory)*, which can be read both literally and as an allegory, although many critics cannot agree on its allegorical meaning.

¹⁰⁴ Gail Day, 'Between Deconstruction and Dialectics', *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1999, p. 105.

¹⁰⁵ Houssaye, p. 4.

**Figure 8. Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus, *Laocoön*, c. 200 B.C.,
184 cm, marble, The Vatican**

Figure 9. Philippe-Auguste Hennequin, *Philosophy Drawing aside the Clouds that Hid the Truth; the Triumph of the French People, or the 10th of August, a relative Allegory to this famous Day*, 1799, 436 x 694 cm, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux Arts, Rouen

**Figure 10. Philippe-Auguste Hennequin, *The French Hercules*, 1800,
Salle des Antonins, 2600 x 2800 cm, oil on ceiling, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 11. Jean-Pierre Franque *Allegory of the Condition of France Before the Return From Egypt*,
1810, 261cm x 326 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 12. Antoine-Jean Baptiste Thomas, *Oenone Refusing to Heal Paris*, 1816,
140 x 146 cm, oil on canvas, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris**

Chapter Three

Pierre Paul Prud'hon was an artist of exceptions. In a time when sixty percent of all artists were born in Paris, Prud'hon was born and raised in rural Burgundy.¹ Traditionally, famous artists show great talent from a young age, but 'Prud'hon fut au contraire un genie tradif. Ce n'est que vers trente ans qu'il devint le grand artiste que nous connaissons'.² Prud'hon was considered an enigma in his own time. Shortly after his death, a student of David's, Etienne-Jean Décluze said: 'I have never been able to decide on the importance of this artist'.³ Prud'hon's inability to adhere to one style seems to have been a calculated move, following a suggestion by his first teacher, François Devosge, who recommended forming 'a style that was not from any master or one school'.⁴ Today, Prud'hon 'alienates art historians' because of this inability to fit him into a category.⁵ However, this is a discredit to an artist whose variety of styles is precisely what makes him a significant artist. Each style will be looked at chronologically in order to better assess Prud'hon's personal style.

Prud'hon and the Rococo

By the time Prud'hon was a practising artist, the Rococo style was waning. However, many critics of Prud'hon declared his art to be old-fashioned and Rococo-like partially

¹ This statistic is based on the years 1785-94. There are no records given before this. White, p. 48.

² Clément, p. 388.

³ Laveissière, p. 12.

⁴ Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 18.

⁵ Helen Weston, 'Prud'hon, Paris and Chantilly', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 139, No. 1137, The Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd., 1997, p. 891.

because Prud'hon continued to depict allegorical scenes. While allegory had by no means disappeared completely by the Republican decades, Prud'hon's allegories were still depicting scenes of love similar to those painted in the Rococo period. The sentimental nature of Prud'hon's subject matter, combined with the quandary of *Ut Pictura Poesis*, also seems to place Prud'hon in the Rococo style. Houssaye described Prud'hon thus: 'Ce qui caractérise surtout Prudhon, c'est l'exquise poésie: il est poète autant qu'il est peintre, car il peint pour les yeux et pour l'âme.'⁶ Houssaye is giving Prud'hon the status of a poet, but Lessing said a painter should not intrude into a poet's domain.⁷ Another reason Prud'hon's style is associated with the Rococo is because of the erotic styling of his characters. David, in particular, damned and praised Prud'hon at the same time, calling him 'the Boucher, the Watteau of our time'.⁸ While Boucher and Watteau were celebrated artists, they were distinctly associated with the monarchy and the Rococo style, which was now considered a frivolous and immoral art. Friedlander, in his book *David to Delacroix*, places Prud'hon with the artist Gros, in the chapter 'Proto-baroque tendencies in the period of classicism'.⁹ Friedlaender claims Prud'hon had

'a much closer connection with the very things that constitute the charm of the *dixhuitième*...he was anything but a revolutionary... these movements (Neoclassicism) demanded was a moral, heroic and activist art at the service of a movement which was opposed to his very being'.¹⁰

Most of Prud'hon's works examined in this thesis have some form of nudity, mainly depicted in the female form. His choice to emphasise the female form, and depict scenes

⁶ Houssaye, p. 38.

⁷ 'poète' in the eighteenth century had a more general meaning than just poet – a poet can also mean someone who works to the 'ouvrages de l'esprit', but in this case I have taken a more literal interpretation of Houssaye's statement.

⁸ Laveissière, p. 12.

⁹ Walter Friedlaender, *David to Delacroix*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1952, p. 51.

¹⁰ Ibid.

of love particularly marked him out from his contemporaries, who chose to depict scenes of male heroism.¹¹ Prud'hon was also using the same visual language as Rococo painters. The Cupid, who was a frequent character in Rococo works, such as Watteau's *Embarkation at Cythera* (Figure 1), also prominently featured in Prud'hon's works.¹²

However, many of the reasons given for Prud'hon being a Rococo artist can be contradicted. While the types of allegories Prud'hon produced were associated with those made in the Rococo style, allegory was not exclusive to the Rococo period. Allegorical compositions continued into the Neoclassical period, but the focus changed from scenes of love to allegories that glorified the values of the French Republic. While Prud'hon painted allegorical scenes of love that seemed to be part of the Rococo movement, he also produced allegories that conformed to the Neoclassical style – allegories of the new government and its values. This can be seen in his political allegories such as *Liberty* (Figure 24) and *The French Constitution* (Figure 51).

Secondly, the nude characters in Prud'hon's work are not 'erotic' in the same sense as those portrayed by other Rococo painters. While the female nude features prominently in his work, the outcome is not the same as with Boucher's paintings. Boucher's characters display eroticised availability and have a playful element to them, as for example, *Odalisque*.¹³ Prud'hon's females are the exact opposite, often unwelcoming, cold and

¹¹ Although a notable exception is David's *The Sabine Women*.

¹² Including *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes*; *Love Bound to Reason*; *The Union of Love and Friendship*; *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows*; *The Triumph of Bonaparte*; *Equality* and *The French Constitution*.

¹³ Boucher, *Odalisque*, 1745, Louvre, oil on canvas.

unengaging to the viewer, with their nudity often secondary to the underlying moral message. However, while it is true that many of Prud'hon's allegories had romantic themes, he in no way neglected allegories of doctrine, such as Liberty and Equality, which were so popular in the Republic.

As noted above, Friedlaender places Prud'hon primarily in the Rococo style because of his lack of participation in Revolutionary events and his lack of producing a moral art to embody the Revolutionary spirit. However, Friedlaender's statement ignores Prud'hon's membership of the *Commune des Arts*, a revolutionary association for artists, for whom he produced drawings, such as *The Law*, *Allegory of the French Constitution*, *Equality* and *Liberty*, which were engraved and made into letterheads for the artistic revolutionary committee.¹⁴ Forest states that Prud'hon 's'en réjouit dans son cœur de citoyen'.¹⁵ Friedlander's claim that Prud'hon failed to produce moral works is also incorrect. Aspects of morality are present in almost every work of Prud'hon, especially in *Union of Love and Friendship*, as well as the warning of greed and riches in his paintings for the Salon de la Richesse. Rather than showing the obvious messages of heroism and patriotism that appear in Neoclassical Stoic works, Prud'hon chose to show morality in a more complex way. Morality and the use of allegory cannot be separated in Prud'hon's work; each expresses and completes the other. Allegory reveals the moral tones, but the moral tones form the basis of what allegory is.

¹⁴ Laveissière, p. 20. These were also donated to The Committee for Public Education.

¹⁵ Alfred Forest, *Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, Peintre Français* (1758-1823), Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1913, p. 53.

Prud'hon and Neoclassicism

Of all the leading artistic styles in eighteenth and nineteenth century France, Neoclassicism is the one that most closely represents Prud'hon's style. This is often disputed, because the model for Neoclassicism was, and still is, David. The disparities between these two artists' works are the result of different approaches to the ideas of Neoclassicism. David was seen as a model for the heroic, bold, masculine Neoclassical art, while in contrast Prud'hon's art was more subtle and relied on the feminine element. One of the chief characteristics of French Neoclassicism is the importance of conveying a moral message. None of Prud'hon's works examined in this thesis are purely aesthetic, each has an underlying message, albeit not as aggressive as the messages of other artists. Rosenblum defines two strands of Neoclassicism: the stoic, and the erotic.¹⁶ David can easily be viewed as a stoic Neoclassicist, whereas Prud'hon can illustrate the erotic Neoclassicism. According to Rosenblum, the *Origin of Painting*, and *Psyche* are classic erotic Neoclassical subject matter.¹⁷ Prud'hon did complete a number of works with *Psyche* as his subject matter. However, by labelling Prud'hon an 'erotic' Neoclassicist, one risks implying that eroticism is the main message in his works, which is untrue. Prud'hon's works have underlying moral messages that do not fit with a purely erotic aesthetic. There is also the problem that Prud'hon's works, despite the nudity, are not very erotic. Thus, Prud'hon sits alone, once more, in a category of his own, somewhere between the erotic and stoic Neoclassicism. Despite these differences, Prud'hon

¹⁶ Rosenblum, p. 20.

¹⁷ Ibid.

'participated in the Neoclassical revival, not as a disciple, but as a master'.¹⁸ According to Brookner 'the only true neoclassicists in French painting are those faulty artists of undeniable consistency of taste, Vien and Prud'hon'.¹⁹ But despite this she states 'Prud'hon was not fundamentally a classicist; he belonged in fact to the first generation of Romantics'.²⁰ However, Brookner contradicts herself because the very definition she gives of a Romantic artist does not fit Prud'hon's career.

Prud'hon's relationship with Neoclassicism is further muddled when viewed through the teachings of Winckelmann. Winckelmann was considered the father of Neoclassicism, with his ideas inspiring a generation of young artists. Brookner states that 'Prud'hon was ignorant of the theories of Winckelmann'.²¹ It is doubtful that Prud'hon could have escaped Winckelmann's ideas. Certainly, Prud'hon was a violator of one of Winckelmann's most important principles that

beauty is more easily to be found in well-formed young men than in those that are not so... those who pay no attention except to the beauty of the female sex, are not likely to have an innate, general and lively feeling for beauty.²²

Prud'hon instead focused his efforts on depicting females, and even the males he did paint were quite androgynous. Winckelmann did promote androgyny as an ideal form of beauty.²³ Prud'hon's style also conforms with that of another pro-antique theoretician, Lessing, who praised antique art for its beauty in the face of ugly emotions.

¹⁸ Lavessière, p. 11.

¹⁹ Anita Brookner, 'Aspects of Neoclassicism in French Painting', *Apollo*, Vol. 68, 1958, p.68.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²² Praz, p. 44.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

There are passions and degrees of passion which are expressed by the most hideous contortions of the face and... the whole body into such unnatural positions as to lose all the beautiful contours of its natural state. The ancient artists either refrained from depicting such emotions or reduced them to a degree where it is possible to show them with a certain measure of beauty. Rage and despair did not degrade any of their works ... anguish was softened into sadness.²⁴

Prud'hon typically never displayed 'ugly' emotions in his work, but chose amiable subject matter such as love, friendship, wisdom and innocence. In some of his more tragic works, such as *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* (Figure 24), the despair of the characters is usually muted, allowing the figures to retain their beauty. Prud'hon's devotion to allegory could be a valid reason why he toned down emotion. Ultimately, it is the allegory and the overall reading of the painting that holds prime importance, rather than distracting the viewer with overly emotive faces. While Prud'hon cannot be called a Neoclassicist with complete certainty, it is undoubtedly the style that his work is most identified with and with the charge of Neoclassicism – to present morality – was where his sympathies lay.

Prud'hon and Romanticism

Romanticism is an artistic movement that is hard to define, and because of this it is difficult to place Prud'hon with the Romantics. Romanticism, unlike the preceding artistic styles, is 'an attitude of mind rather than a set of particular stylistic traits'.²⁵

Romanticism is a reactionary movement, not just against Neoclassicism, but the

²⁴ Lessing, pp. 481-482.

²⁵ Chilvers, 'Romanticism', *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, p. 484.

Enlightenment itself.²⁶ The French Romantics turned away from the moral doctrines and stoic characters favoured in Neoclassicism, and began to depict dramatic, exotic scenes full of emotion that appealed to the senses rather than the mind. Heroism and morality in art now become twisted, with a kind of 'anti-hero' created in Romantic art. For instance, the central character in Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* is more a villain than a hero – because it is these scenes of death and destruction that inflame the senses rather than Neoclassical works. Instead of representing scenes from ancient literature, the Romantic artists preferred literature by authors such as Shakespeare, Goethe and Dante. The Romantics had a fascination with the macabre, in particular Géricault, who would go to the morgue or an insane asylum for inspiration. Romantics were fascinated with deep rich colours, and Delacroix himself wrote extensively on colour theory. With these aspects in mind, it is very hard to picture Prud'hon as a Romantic artist. Why then, is Prud'hon included in so many books about Romanticism?

Prud'hon's association with Romanticism largely occurred after his death, and this association has little to do with his art, but rather his temperament. After Prud'hon's death, art critics began to see commonalities between the Romantic artist's lifestyle, and that of Prud'hon. Georges Lefenestre reinforces this with the statement that Prud'hon was 'déjà victime des entraînements de son cœur'.²⁷ Lefenestre goes even further and declares Prud'hon and Gros 'vraiment les pères de l'art moderne'... [ayant eu] la bonne fortune

²⁶ William Vaughan, 'Romanticism'. In *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T073207> (4/3/ 2010).

²⁷ Georges Lefenestre, *La Tradition dans la Peinture Française*, Paris, L-H. May, 1898, p. 34.

d'échapper à l'oppression irrésistible de David'.²⁸ Part of this myth of the Romantic artist is based on the fact that they worked alone, with no followers and so were unpopular. Most of all, they were seen as being unwilling to compromise their artistic integrity. Prud'hon himself did little to refute the idea of a suffering genius. When writing condolences to his friend Falconnier about the passing of his mother, Prud'hon could not help but emphasize his own misfortunes:

J'ai perdu en quatre mois un père et une mère qui m'aimaient tendrement.... Je restai donc sans fortune, sans secours, sans talent ; de plus, ingénu, timide, confiant, ne connaissant point le monde, et enfin abandonné à moi-même.²⁹

The imagined antithesis and rivalry between Prud'hon and David also add to the argument that Prud'hon was a Romantic. The argument is simplistic and flawed: Romanticism is a reaction to Neoclassicism. David is the opposite of Prud'hon. Therefore, Prud'hon is a Romantic.

Another reason Prud'hon is often considered a Romantic, comes from the Romantic artists themselves. Delacroix admired Prud'hon, and published an article where he explicitly compares Géricault and Prud'hon. The quintessential Romantic, Géricault, also admired Prud'hon, and copied Prud'hon's *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*. Prud'hon became a kind of Romantic hero, and was a favourite of Delacroix. In his autobiography, the Symbolist artist, Odilon Redon mentioned Prud'hon as having an

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 32-33.

²⁹ Clément, p. 16.

esprit si tendre et si passionnée [qu'il] fut éclipsé durant le Premier Empire par l'éclat scolastique et pédantesque d'une école où David primait avec tout l'éclat et l'autorité d'une grande renommée.³⁰

In other words he was saying Prud'hon had a Romantic spirit. Romanticism developed out of the growing distaste for Neoclassicism. David became the enemy of Romanticism, and therefore the enemy of Prud'hon.

Modern day critics still see Prud'hon as 'the very image of the desperate Romantic artist'.³¹ Brookner classifies Prud'hon as a Romantic artist who had 'little respect for classical art as it was taught by the Académie'.³² Apart from his 'melancholic' life, Prud'hon is also included in anthologies on Romanticism because of the intense feelings evoked by some of his works. *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13) is one of the works so often mentioned in conjunction with Romanticism.³³ The dramatic lighting, the lonely and eerie setting, the violent subject matter and the tortured face of the criminal all seem to point towards the Romantic style.

However, I find that the arguments for Prud'hon being a Romantic are not compelling. First of all, the myths that Prud'hon lived a tragic and unfulfilling life can be dispelled. An 1846 biography described Prud'hon as 'généralement aimé et recherché... [il] semblait devoir être contenter de son sort' and names Mayer and Boulanger de

³⁰ Odilon Redon, *À Soi-même Journal 1867-1915, Notes sur la Vie, L'Art et les Artistes*, Paris, José Corti, 1989, p. 154.

³¹ John Elderfield, *The Language of the Body: Drawings by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon*, New York, Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1996, p. 12. However, Friedlaender strongly denies any Romantic tendencies: 'he was never forced to endure an artistic martyrdom because he stood alone against the dominant Davidian style', p. 52.

³² Anita Brookner, *Romanticism and Its Discontents*, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 2000, p. 16.

³³ Prud'hon, *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*, 1808, Louvre, oil on canvas.

Boisfremont as his students.³⁴ Prud'hon, while often struggling to make ends meet, was willing to compromise by resorting to 'low' arts in order to support his family. This seems a more realistic assessment of Prud'hon, for if he were truly unknown and under-appreciated, his name would not have survived into the present era. A quote, supposedly attributed to Napoleon, might suggest Prud'hon did not wish to seek fame. In 1808, when Prud'hon, along with David, was given the Legion of Honour, Napoleon called Prud'hon 'a violet, hiding itself under its leaves'.³⁵ The fact that he received such a prestigious award shows that Prud'hon had a following.

If one ignores Prud'hon's temperament entirely, and focuses solely on his art, then it becomes even more difficult to see Prud'hon as a Romantic. While many of Prud'hon's works were emotive, he did not depict emotions in the same way as a Romantic would have dared. Prud'hon did not express emotions through the face, but rather through line and body, whereas a Romantic would have expressed emotion through colour and facial expression. It is also clear that Prud'hon did not have the same relationship with colour as the Romantics. An experienced print artist, Prud'hon was used to not relying on colour at all as a means of expression. When examining some of his works, such as *Wisdom and Truth Descending* (Figure 21) and *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20), the colours are relatively muted, so as not to distract from the main message of the painting.

³⁴ Fabien Pillet, 'Prud'hon (Pierre)', *Biographie Universelle, Ancienne et Moderne, Supplement*, Vol. 34, 1846, p. 429.

³⁵ Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 9.

Prud'hon's major work *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13) is seen by some critics as an example of a Romantic work. However, the real inspiration for this work was Horace, not modern literature, which was so often the case for Romantics.³⁶ *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* is also the exceptional work, not the norm, for Prud'hon. The violent subject matter is unusual for him, in comparison with works such as *Union of Love and Friendship*. The use of violence is primarily to illustrate the allegorical figures of Justice and Vengeance, rather than for an aesthetic purpose. Binion, the author of *Love Beyond Death*, writes of a nineteenth century phenomenon, the combination of sex and death in artworks, that change from having negative connotations to having positive ones.³⁷ He attributes this fascination with the macabre to the rise of Romanticism, particularly in literature. Binion also cites Prud'hon's *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* as an example of this 'new' art.³⁸ However, this idea is flawed because Prud'hon is not showing the victim's death as positive, or sexual, but as the result of a criminal act. The fascination and excitement with the macabre, yet to emerge, was heralded by Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (Figure 14).

There is also evidence to rebuff Brookner's claim of Prud'hon as a Romantic because of his disdain for the *Académie*. However, Prud'hon was an *Académie* student who had been awarded Academic prizes. He was deeply indebted to classical art and the *Académie*, as he made numerous life drawing studies, and his subjects were almost entirely drawn from

³⁶ By modern, I mean non-classical – Romantics liked Shakespeare, Dante as well as works by their contemporaries.

³⁷ Rudolph Binion, *Love Beyond Death: The Anatomy of a Myth in the Arts*, New York, New York University Press, 1993, p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

classical art.³⁹ Brookner describes the Romantics as artists who take risks. This characteristic cannot be attributed to Prud'hon, for while he was seen as being different in his own time, he was not known for his radicalism but instead for using a conservative style in a revolutionary time. While Prud'hon's art may feature quasi romantic subjects, they lack both the macabre element of the Romantic movement and the total engagement of emotion. Prud'hon's works that appear to be emotive, cannot be seen as Romantic because emotions are not what Prud'hon is trying to evoke in the viewer. Instead, he is trying to emphasize the moral messages behind the works. Romantic artists, rebelling against the idea of moral education through art, were striving to get the viewer to rely on their senses.

Prud'hon and the influence of Renaissance artists

Despite many critics attempting to analyse Prud'hon's style, it is unclear exactly how Prud'hon classified himself, or if he even classified himself at all. It is clearly a struggle to tie Prud'hon to one school of art. This is perhaps due to his devotion to artists of the Renaissance. Prud'hon became aware of Renaissance masters during his period in Rome, from 1784 to 1788, as a result of winning the *Prix de Rome*.⁴⁰ Despite his three years in Rome, it is apparent that the art of the past deeply affected Prud'hon. The best indicators of Prud'hon's personal inspirations and style come from his correspondence during his stay in Rome, where he mentions his deep admiration for Leonardo Da Vinci.

³⁹ Laveissière has a whole section dedicated to academic drawings, from pp. 255- 274.

⁴⁰ Many sources tell of Prud'hon's generous nature in the competition when he helped another competitor with his work. The other competitor won, until Prud'hon's intervention was discovered, and he was awarded the prize. Delacroix, p. 434.

Son maître et son héros, l'inimitable, le père, le prince, le premier de tous les peintres qui a surpassé bien au delà Raphaël dans la pensée, la justesse de la réflexion et du sentiment.⁴¹

Leonardo had yet to achieve the popularity and fame that he has today.⁴² Prud'hon's choice to follow an artist that was not on the prescribed list for young artists to emulate, such as Raphael, shows he was not a populist. Prud'hon did appreciate the study of the ancients, but declared on leaving Rome

I must walk alone and do without a guide. For, what [was the guide] of these amazing men whose works we admire, I mean in particular Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo, since the first never consulted the ancients and came to Rome only at a very advanced age, and after having produced remarkable masterpieces; and the second followed only the flame of his genius.⁴³

Louis Antoine Prat sees similarities between Prud'hon's and Leonardo's works in the use of *sfumato*, the androgynous body types and the inability to finish what they had started.⁴⁴ *The Last Supper* was one such painting Prud'hon admired, and which he described as 'le premier tableau du monde, et le chef-d'oeuvre de la peinture'.⁴⁵ Prud'hon and Leonardo also shared similar ideas. Leonardo also followed no other artist, saying 'no one should ever imitate the style of another because he will be called a nephew and not a child of nature with regard to art'.⁴⁶ Prud'hon's tendency to represent the female form, in an overwhelmingly male dominated world, also has similarities with Leonardo, who is best known for his exquisitely enigmatic and feminine works, such as *Portrait of a Woman*

⁴¹ Prud'hon quoted in André Michel, 'L'Art à L'Exposition Universelle', *Journal des Débats*, 1900, p. 1.

⁴² Lavessière, p. 51.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Louis-Antoine Prat, 'Prud'hon: Le Trait Amoureux', *L'œil* 488, 1997, p. 70. In particular, an early study for *The Union of Love and Friendship* owes much to Leonardo, with its full blown sfumato, however it is overdone, and the figure of Friendship becomes frightening.

⁴⁵ Clément, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Ed Wright, *A Left-Handed History of the World*, Murdoch Books Pty. Ltd., London, 2007, p. 56.

(Figure 15).⁴⁷ The opening of the Louvre in 1793 allowed Prud'hon access to several of Leonardo's paintings, including *Madonna of the Rocks* (Figure 32) and *St. John the Baptist* (Figure 33).⁴⁸

Raphael was another artist Prud'hon hoped to emulate – for his Burgundian commission he wanted to copy tapestries that were based on works by Raphael, whom he described as 'le plus éminemment le génie divin de ce grand maître'.⁴⁹ Prud'hon made his own version of Raphael's *School of Athens* (Figure 16), but renamed his *Le Séjour de l'Immortalité* (Figure 17).⁵⁰ Raphael's version depicts great classical philosophers, while Prud'hon shows great modern philosophers including Descartes, and references Raphael's original, by including the famous artist in the composition.⁵¹

Correggio is another artist mentioned in Prud'hon's correspondence. Yet Correggio's works were not found in Rome. Prud'hon must have seen Correggio's art while on two trips made to Florence.⁵² Several of Correggio's works were acquired by Louis XIV, and eventually made their way into the Louvre.⁵³ Prud'hon later gained the epithet 'the French Correggio', because of his stylistic similarities, and he was also responsible for

⁴⁷ Leonardo, *Portrait of a Woman* (also known as *La Belle Ferronnière*), c. 1495-99, Louvre, tempera on walnut wood.

⁴⁸ Anita Brookner, 'Prud'hon's The Union of Love and Friendship', *ARTnews* 64, November, 1965, p. 38. Leonardo, *Madonna of the Rocks* (also known as *Virgin of the Rocks*), c. 1483-86, Louvre, oil on panel. Leonardo, *St. John the Baptist*, 1513-16, Louvre, oil on wood.

⁴⁹ Clément., p. 18.

⁵⁰ Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1510-11, Apostolic Palace, Vatican, fresco. Prud'hon, *Le Séjour de l'Immortalité*, c.1800-1810, Musée Condé, Chantilly, crayon on paper.

⁵¹ This was a study for a project to decorate a room at the Sorbonne. Anita Brookner, 'Prud'hon: Master Decorator of the Empire', *Apollo* 80, 1965, p. 196.

⁵² Clément, p. 15.

⁵³ The Louvre has four of Correggio's works: *Allegory of Vices*, c. 1542, tempera on fabric; *Allegory of Virtues*, c. 1530, tempera on fabric; *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine, in front of St. Sebastian*, c. 1526-1527, poplar wood; *Jupiter and Antiope*, c. 1524-27.

restoring Correggio's *Leda and the Swan* for the Louvre, which had lost its head on its travels from Italy to France.⁵⁴ For Prud'hon, 'Le Corrège n'était pas seulement un maître pour lui; c'était un ami dont il avait partagé les joies et les angoisses'.⁵⁵ Houssaye calls Prud'hon 'Correggio's son'.⁵⁶ Correggio's influence is especially evident in Prud'hon's *Psyche Carried off by Zephyrs* (Figure 18).⁵⁷ Correggio's *Venus, Satyr and Cupid* (Figure 19), also found in the Louvre, has a similar mythological theme of a female giving herself up to abandonment.⁵⁸ Both Venus and Psyche have their arms raised above their heads and their eyes closed in ecstasy. Both Venus and Psyche are subjected to outside forces – Psyche is carried away by the zephyrs while Venus is unwittingly spied on by the satyr.

So why did Prud'hon feel such an affinity with the Renaissance rather than his own time? Ames notes that 'artists of provincial origin were likelier to stick to their own (possibly inherited) preferences in physique than artists more directly exposed to ancient sculpture and to modern competition'.⁵⁹ Coming from provincial Burgundy, Prud'hon would not have had the access to contemporary art unlike those in Paris. At Cluny Abbey, where Prud'hon spent his formative years, the art would have been overwhelmingly from medieval and Renaissance times.⁶⁰ His later visit to Rome would further reveal the splendour of the Italian Renaissance. Houssaye noted the varying stylistic influences on Prud'hon and concluded: 'En effet, le génie de Prud'hon n'est-il pas dans l'alliance de la

⁵⁴ Houssaye, p. 40.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Houssaye, p. 41 Forest similarly calls Correggio 'un frère aîné'. Forest, p. 41.

⁵⁷ Prud'hon, *Psyche Carried off By Zephyr*, 1808, Louvre, oil on canvas.

⁵⁸ Correggio, *Venus, Satyr and Cupid*, c. 1524-1527, Louvre, oil on canvas.

⁵⁹ Winslow Ames, 'Some Physical Types Favored by Western Artists', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, Vol. 24, Part 1, 1954, p. 95.

⁶⁰ Cluny Abbey was founded in c.910, but had later additions in the thirteenth, fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. <http://cluny.monuments-nationaux.fr/>, (1/2/2010).

grâce antique et du sentiment des âges modernes?’⁶¹ This explains Prud'hon's complex relationship between the art of the past and the art of his time. His mode of working and influences came from the Renaissance, but the emotions he was trying to communicate in his work were distinctly responding to that of his time. An example of this is *Liberty* (Figure 22). His influences and approach were distinctly from the past, but he was responding to Revolutionary events. Perhaps Prud'hon's preference for the art of the past was what made him seem like an outsider in the art world.

Prud'hon and the Art World

The idea that Prud'hon was isolated from artistic society is also flawed. Prud'hon fraternized with a number of artists who made up the *Commune des Arts*. In 1794, he was chosen by David to be a member of the Jury of Arts.⁶² In 1799, he signed the petition for Vigée Lebrun to return to Paris, and in the same year, he attended a banquet held in the honour of Vien.⁶³ Elderfield states that Prud'hon ‘vacillated between participation in and isolation from the possibility of his own recognition’.⁶⁴ Yet Prud'hon's efforts did not go unrewarded. He was awarded the Legion of Honour, and while he did not achieve the fame, nor command the fees that David did, he was by no means a failure, nor completely unrecognized.⁶⁵ In 1794 he was granted two thousand francs as part of the Republican

⁶¹ Houssaye, p. 41.

⁶² Jacques-Louis David, ‘The Jury of Art’, 1794, *Art In Theory 1648-1815*, p. 723.

⁶³ Lavessière, p. 21.

⁶⁴ Elderfield, p. 9.

⁶⁵ Prud'hon was awarded the Legion of Honour at age fifty. Jane Turner (ed.), Turner, Jane (ed.), *The Grove Dictionary of Art: From David to Ingres Early Nineteenth Century French Art*, London, Macmillan Reference Ltd., 2000, p. 344.

governmental support for the arts and sciences.⁶⁶ Although Prud'hon despised following any one living master, he had his own students and, by Forest's account, was an able teacher who actually lived according to the principles of the French Revolution.

Il recevait des élèves de tous les rangs de la société; il était patient, toujours d'une politesse exquise envers tous, affectueux même, surtout avec les petits et les humbles, car il n'oublia jamais qu'il était né parmi les pauvres!⁶⁷

Arsène Houssaye, a nineteenth century art critic, perhaps describes Prud'hon best, as a painter of all times and countries.⁶⁸

Prud'hon and David

As already discussed, Prud'hon is often compared to the famous Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825). Prud'hon was ten years younger than David, but they moved in the same circles, as both were members of the *Commune des Arts*, and were also favoured artists of the Napoleonic family. While Prud'hon was in Rome, David and his student, Drouais, were also there. The division between David and Prud'hon was already evident, well before Prud'hon had made his name. Prud'hon was critical of Drouais' *Marius at Minturnae*, describing it as 'tiresome flashiness'.⁶⁹ Laveissière states that David's school favoured the use of line, in comparison to Prud'hon's use of light and volume, to bring life to the figures.⁷⁰ The creation of Prud'hon as the 'anti-David' was largely brought about after Prud'hon's death, by figures such as the Goncourt brothers. David was the popularist, while Prud'hon was the underrated genius who had a natural talent.

⁶⁶ Laveissière, p. 20.

⁶⁷ Forest, p. 121.

⁶⁸ Houssaye, p. 5.

⁶⁹ Drouais, *Marius at Minturnae*, 1786, Louvre, oil on canvas. Laveissière, p. 13.

⁷⁰ Laveissière, p. 12.

Cet homme, gâté par les adorations de l'admiration publique, immortel de son vivant, était proclamé par le goût et aussi par les passions des contemporains, le restaurateur de l'antiquité: c'était David. A l'écart, dans l'ombre, il y avait un peintre que David appelait avec mépris « Le Boucher de son temps ». Cependant celui-ci portait dans la tête la Grèce et les Dieux... . L'intuition était sa science... . Mais le nom de ce peintre ne devait être populaire que dans la postérité : il s'appelait Prud'hon.⁷¹

Houssaye compares the relationship between David and Prud'hon with their earlier seventeenth-century counterparts, Lebrun and Lesueur.⁷² Lebrun, the 'painter of the times' with a forceful personality is David, while the timid and simple artist, Lesueur, the 'painter of all times and countries', is Prud'hon.⁷³ David best represents the masculine, public art of the time. *The Oath of Horatii* (Figure 3) emphasises the Republic's suspicion of women and provides a solution with authoritarian control.⁷⁴ Prud'hon's works were always delicate, yet graceful, and usually dominated by a woman. Prud'hon did not depict his females as weak, but susceptible to fall under the spell of love. Prud'hon also depicted a number of extremely strong and compelling women, in particular his *Liberty* (Figure 22), and the females in *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13). Part of the reason Prud'hon could have been found wanting was his lack of attention to the theme of *exemplum virtutis*. David and his school were famous for their scenes of moral virtue, in particular death-bed scenes, virtuous widows and oaths. While Prud'hon's works did not lack a moral component, they were more complex and understated than David's.⁷⁵ Supporters of David were particularly harsh towards Prud'hon as his fame grew. He was always passed over in favour of David's

⁷¹ Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *L'Art du Dix-huitième Siècle*, Paris, Hermann, 1967, p.179.

⁷² Houssaye, p. 5.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Boime, *Revolution*, p. 399. The notable exception is of course *The Sabine Women*.

⁷⁵ Despite this, Prud'hon did do one work that could be considered an *exemplum virtutis*: *Andromache Mourning Hector*, commissioned by Empress Marie-Louise.

school, and missed out on being elected as a full member of *Académie* multiple times, in favour of Girodet, Guérin, Gros and Gérard.⁷⁶ Certainly Prud'hon's relatively dim position in the limelight has made him more mysterious and evocative, as written by Held: 'Turning from them [David and his school] to him [Prud'hon] is like turning from the brilliant light of day to the shadowy mysteries of a moonlit night'.⁷⁷ Prud'hon, despite the imaginary nature of his works, was a practical man. He knew the bills had to be paid, and was not afraid to accept commissions from 'lower arts' such as letterheads for government departments and printmaking. In contrast, David was always thinking monumentally, and not without some impudence. In 1799, he charged people the right to view *The Sabine Women*, the second French artist ever to do so.⁷⁸ The main difference between David and Prud'hon was David's unlimited ambition and desire for fame. Prud'hon, however did not feel the same way – as he stated: 'l'ambition est souvent un mauvais guide'.⁷⁹ Despite any animosity between the two, imagined or genuine, Prud'hon did sign the 1816 petition which asked for an amnesty so that David could return to France.⁸⁰ In the end, Prud'hon's caution and shying from the limelight saved his career, for with the fall of Napoleon, David's life was left in ruins.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 219. Another reason David achieved such fame (apart from his grandiose personality) was that his aristocratic birth gave him access to a society that common born Prud'hon would not have had. Guffey, p. 21. Despite this, on one occasion Prud'hon trumped David at the Prix Décennaux of 1810, when *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* received twenty-one votes for an honourable mention, in comparison with only thirteen for David's *Sabine Women*. Laveissière, p. 24.

⁷⁷ Julius S. Held, 'A Forgotten Prud'hon in New York', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 6 S, T. 24, 1943, p. 283.

⁷⁸ Greuze was the first artist to do so with *Septimius Severus Reproaching Caracalla*, 1769, Louvre, oil on canvas.

⁷⁹ Letter to Falconnier, c. 1787, Clément, p. 153.

⁸⁰ Laveissière, p. 25.

⁸¹ Although it should be noted that David willingly exiled himself to Belgium.

**Figure 13. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*, 1808,
243 x 292 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 14. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818-19,
491 x 716 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 15. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1495-99,
65 x 45 cm, tempera on walnut wood, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 16. Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (Raphael), *The School of Athens*, 1509-1510,
500 cm x 770 cm, fresco, Apostolic Palace, Vatican**

**Figure 17. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Le Séjour de l'Immortalité*, c. 1808,
26.6 x 24.4 cm, black and white crayon, Musée Condé, Chantilly,**

**Figure 18. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Psyche Carried Off By Zephyrs*, 1808,
195 x 157 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 19. Antonio Allegri Correggio, *Venus, Satyr and Cupid*, 1524-1527,
188 x 125 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre**

Chapter Four

Prud'hon and Allegory

It is fair to say that 'le véritable génie de Prud'hon, son domaine, son empire, c'est l'allégorie'.¹ The large majority of his works were allegories, and it was these allegorical compositions that brought him the most success. Prud'hon's achievement within the allegorical genre is something of an enigma, for while allegorical paintings were common in the era preceding Prud'hon, they had largely fallen out of favour by the time he was a practising artist. A select few artists, such as Regnault and Hennequin worked in the allegorical genre, but they often dabbled in other genres.² Prud'hon's allegories are unique because of their many layers. His use of allegory is sophisticated, and for deeper understanding, it requires classical and philosophical learning, as well as the reading of the characters as a whole. Prud'hon's allegories can generally be divided into three categories: moral allegories, abstract political allegories, and allegorical portraits. Jules Renouvier best describes the charm of Prud'hon's allegories.

His work was devoid of the usual drawbacks of the genre: improbability, obscurity, and flattery. His study of the antique, his feeling for nature...and his ideal of painting as a whole... were distilled in an abstract and moral concept that he was able to depict in a clear and natural manner, at once political and picturesque.³

¹ Delacroix, p. 445.

² Philippe-Auguste Hennequin (1762-1833) was a student of David's, but found he could not adapt to David's style. Hennequin and Prud'hon's had similar careers. Hennequin, like Prud'hon spent most of the Revolutionary years producing allegories, with some portraiture on the side. Both Hennequin and Prud'hon were forced to flee from Paris on the fall of Robespierre.

³ Laveissière, p. 157.

Renouvier's statement shows Prud'hon was able to overcome many of the eighteenth and nineteenth century concerns about allegory. Prud'hon's allegories, despite using classical themes, were understandable to most because of his ability to simplify the allegory. Prud'hon eliminated superfluous figures and accessories so that the message of the allegory was not lost within any decorative elements of the painting. Prud'hon's ability to simplify the allegory is evident when contrasted with Boucher's work, *France Consoled by Fidelity*.⁴ Boucher's work contains a number of figures that are disconnected by their separate actions – there is a lack of unity between each tableau. This is in contrast with Prud'hon's *Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20), which contains only three characters. The message of the allegory is not communicated by the actions of the characters, but by their gestures – the linked arms and close bodies. While Prud'hon is guilty of using an obscure allegorical subject, his simplified approach means that although the precise allegorical figures may not be recognised, their gestures ensure that the feeling of love and closeness is still conveyed. With his allegories, Prud'hon was able to transport viewers to an imaginary world, where the abstract concepts he portrayed lived in physical form. By using classical allusions, links could be made between the past and present. Jules Renouvier stated that Prud'hon was the true painter of the Revolution, an idea which gains credence, for the Revolution, too, used classical allusions to link the glory of ancient civilisations to that of modern France. In effect, while Prud'hon was considered old fashioned because of his choice of allegory, his classical references show he was responding to the political and artistic situations of his own time. Prud'hon modernized his allegories by adding to the traditions of old.

⁴ François Boucher, *France Consoled by Fidelity*, before 1760, Musée des Beaux Arts, Lille, oil on canvas.

Crucial to the concept of allegory was the invention of set and recognizable iconographical characters. The pictorial language of allegory was formalised in 1593, with the publication of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. The *Iconologia* was extremely influential; it was illustrated and translated into a number of languages. Ripa wrote about personifications and allegorical concepts, such as Time and Friendship, and advised on the iconography needed to depict them. Ripa was extremely detailed in his descriptions, which left little room for the artist to experiment. Menon believes Ripa was most influential on Prud'hon from 1784-1788.⁵ She compares Friendship from *The Union of Love and Friendship* to Ripa's description of Friendship:

A young blonde woman, simply draped in the white colour of truth, upon which friendship is based. She points to her bare bosom....the wreath she wears is of myrtle...she is barefoot...she treads a skull, for friendship jeers at death. At her feet is a dog, the old symbol of fidelity.⁶

While Friendship is bare breasted and barefoot in Prud'hon's *The Union of Love and Friendship*, she is neither blonde, nor dressed in white nor crowned in myrtle, but rather wears pomegranate flowers. Prud'hon did not follow any of Ripa's advice for depicting Friendship, and it is through the title of the painting, and the pairing with the more recognizable Love, that the audience gains understanding to the figure's identity. Ripa's advice, while detailed, is simply impractical and ill suited to Prud'hon's style because of the extreme details and attributes. Because of this Prud'hon probably found it easier to invent his own version of Friendship, but the underlying meanings of Ripa's *Iconologia*

⁵ Elizabeth Menon, 'Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's Union of Love and Friendship Reconsidered', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, Series 6, Volume 130, 1997, pp. 156-157.

⁶ Cesare Ripa and Edward A. Maser (ed.), *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery: The 1758-1760 Hertel Edition of Ripa's 'Iconologia'*, New York, Dover Publications, 1971, pl. 52.

still remain.⁷ However Ripa's personifications that are more aligned to the classical tradition do share similarities with Prud'hon's work, as for example, Ripa's description of Truth.

She is a nude female figure, modestly covered with a bit of drapery, who holds a sun in one hand, and an open book and a palm leaf in the other. She rests one foot on a globe of the world. Truth's nudity indicates that truth is a natural state and, like a nude person, exists without need for any artificial embellishment. The sun, the source of all light, chases away the shadows, as truth does in the mind.⁸

Looking at Prud'hon's *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth* (Figure 21) one can see that some of these aspects are clearly expressed, but once again, Ripa's overwhelming description of personification does not fit with Prud'hon's style of simple and understated allegories. This makes Prud'hon stand out from amongst other allegorists of his time.

Jean-Baptiste Regnault's *The Genius of France Between Liberty and Death* (Figure 23) follows Ripa's instructions almost to the letter.⁹ Ripa describes Liberty as being

a seated woman...dressed in white robes, with a classical helmet and corselet. She rests her right arm on a shield decorated with a sheaf of arrows, and in her right hand holds a sceptre and a staff on which is hung a Phrygian cap. She holds high in her other hand a palm leaf and an olive branch. She leans against a broken column to which a shield and a quiver of arrows are bound with a vine.¹⁰

Regnault's Liberty is seated, with the lictors rods at her feet and a shield to her left. She holds in her hands the Phrygian cap and measuring instruments – she basically carries all the attributes that Ripa suggests. However, Prud'hon's *Liberty* (Figure 22) is only

⁷ There are plenty of occasions where Prud'hon did not use Ripa's advice. For instance, Ripa describes the figure of Retribution as being a tall, bearded, roughly dressed man, who is cutting down a tree. In *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*, the figure of Retribution here is clearly not based on Ripa's description.

⁸ Ibid., pl. 50.

⁹ Jean-Baptiste Regnault, *The Genius of France Between Liberty and Death*, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, oil on canvas.

¹⁰ Ripa, pl. 62.

carrying an axe – not the traditional weapon associated with Liberty, but more appropriate. The axe, the tool of the common man, reflects the spirit of the Revolution, the rising up of the lower classes and the institution of Equality. In this case, Prud'hon has chosen to depict one attribute because that is all that is needed for interpretation. The freedom Prud'hon exercised in making allegories his own is significant for the times. Prud'hon may have realised that complete submission to the artistic rules of the past was not in line with the Revolutionary spirit. But on the other hand, he did not make a complete break with all classical references, because he sensed the importance of retaining the crucial elements of the past that still had meaning to his contemporary viewers. Prud'hon essentially simplified Ripa's designs in order to appeal to his generation's preference for simplicity in art.

Moral Allegories

Prud'hon's exemplary work was in the field of moral allegories.¹¹ Although Prud'hon was not promoting the same moral values as the Stoic Neoclassicists, this does not mean his works are any less influential. While David was targeting the Salons, Prud'hon's works were more readily available and much more appealing to everyday people.¹² Prud'hon's moral allegories fall into two categories: cautionary tales and celebratory allegories. *Love Seducing Innocence, With Repentance in its Wake* (Figure 47) represents

¹¹ Some of the allegories discussed in this section can be described as both moral and political allegories. In cases where there are both elements of the moral and political, I have chosen to place these allegories in the moral section because I believe that the moral message is more important or more dominant than the political message.

¹² This is due to Prud'hon using printmaking which had the ability to reach a wider audience. Within his printmaking, he not only made moral allegories, but also book illustrations.

a cautionary tale, while *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20), is a celebratory allegory. His cautionary tales warn of misplaced trust, the perils of lust and wealth. Prud'hon is, in essence, a Neoclassical version of Chardin and Greuze, for Prud'hon's themes are similar, although his method of approaching these differs from these earlier artists. Prud'hon's later collaborations with his student Mayer, in the series *The Happy Family* and *The Unhappy Family*, are almost a direct reference to Greuze's works *The Ungrateful Son* and *The Punished Son*; both tell of the woes of family life. Prud'hon's moral allegories vacillate between the elaborate and the simple. Yet one thing cannot be denied – that Prud'hon understood the complexities of the medium of allegory and experimented with it. While most agree that Prud'hon's moral allegories were well thought out and meaningful, Katherine Gordon argues that 'none of these paintings by Prud'hon had the specificity of meaning that the works of Pigalle, Pompadour and Falconet possessed. The meaning they did have appealed only to a misty-eyed minority of his contemporaries'.¹³ In the following examination of Prud'hon's moral allegories, it will be shown that Gordon's assertions are untrue.

Cupid Bound To Reason and Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes (1793)

Cupid Bound to Reason (Figure 25) and *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* (Figure 24) were a two part set of engravings made by Copia based on original drawings by

¹³ Katherine K. Gordon, 'Madame Pompadour, Pigalle, and the Iconography of Friendship', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 50, No. 3, September 1968, p. 262.

Prud'hon, published in 1793.¹⁴ They were commissioned by the Comte d'Harlai, along with another work, *The Vengeance of Ceres*. Friedlaender described the pair as 'charming, playful, minor works'.¹⁵ *Cupid Bound to Reason* shows a baby Cupid chained to a bust of Minerva, while a woman (who is usually named as Venus) watches in glee, with Cupid's bow and arrows at her side. This is one of Prud'hon's more literal allegories: Love is physically chained to Wisdom (Minerva); meaning wisdom takes precedence over the whims of the heart. Prud'hon's work has a wall frieze running through the background which reflects the subject of Prud'hon's work, and shows a mother diapering a baby – showing that through wisdom and reasoning love can produce happiness, because it leads to children.¹⁶

Clément attributes Rome's powerful influence to the production of these works.

Ce sont des ouvrages nés de la même inspiration; fruits poétiques des loisirs féconds qui avaient naturellement mûri dans l'âme de la artiste pendant les quatre années solitaires qu'il passa dans la ville éternelle, occupé moins à travailler qu'à lire profondément en lui-même.¹⁷

Prud'hon's attempt to depict an accurate antique setting can be seen in his background friezes, the costumes and the statue of Minerva. Prud'hon's elaborate use of classical drapery is also revealing. Interest is created in the woman's drapery by the slim vertical folds at her hem, contrasting with the larger horizontal folds over the top. This was in part inspired by his travels in Rome, where he would have seen sculpture and Greek vases depicting drapery such as this, as well as the publication of discoveries made at Pompeii

¹⁴ These two works were reproduced in four states, with varying inscriptions. Edmond de Goncourt, *Catalogue Raisonné de l'oeuvre Peint, Dessiné et Gravé de P. P. Prud'hon*, p. 137.

¹⁵ Friedlaender, p. 54.

¹⁶ Laveissière, p. 76.

¹⁷ Clément, p. 165.

and Herculaneum. However, Prud'hon is also representing a modern trend. Along with the Revolution came new fashions that were inspired by ancient Rome, such as the wearing of chitons and antique hairstyles – which can be seen on Prud'hon's model in *Cupid Bound to Reason*. A contemporary critic observed this, and wrote that 'the Venus may be a bit too French, but in fact some of the Greek deities would have been improved by this look'.¹⁸ Clément also admired Prud'hon's handling of Venus.

Il est impossible d'imaginer une figure plus élégante, plus voluptueuse, d'une invention plus imprévue et plus heureuse que celle de cette jeune femme. C'est une enchanteresse.¹⁹

The companion piece, *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* shows a sneering cupid laughing at a woman lying on the ground in tears. At her feet is a dead rose, symbolising the end of the relationship. Her bodice is undone, suggesting she has been seduced and abandoned. Cupid's arrows lie on the ground, having found their target and accomplished their task.²⁰ Prud'hon again uses a frieze in the background to reflect the main scene: an embracing couple surrounded by cupids. The cautionary message is that lust and passion can get in the way of common sense and in the end cause much pain. This may have been a personal subject for Prud'hon, who himself made a hasty and unwise marriage due to passion.

The themes represented in these two works are still very much in line with the Rococo style, as Cupid and Venus scenes, such as Boucher's *Venus Disarms Love* and Natoire's

¹⁸ Anonymous writer in *Le Moniteur*, Laveissière, p. 76.

¹⁹ Clément, p. 165.

²⁰ Laveissière, p. 78.

Beauty Relights the Flame of Love were extremely popular.²¹ However, instead of erotic and playful scenes of love, these engravings are cautionary tales of love gone wrong, the perils of ignoring the mind over the heart. Prud'hon's style is also much more austere and Neoclassical than the style seen in the works of artists such as Boucher. Prud'hon's works are also much more sinister than one would expect for a reasonably light-hearted subject matter.²² In *Cupid Bound by Reason* the physical chaining of Cupid, who is represented as a baby, is somewhat disturbing – especially the expression of glee the woman finds in chaining him. Cupid's satisfaction in causing pain is also disturbing, as causing pain is the antithesis of the love. The twisted expression on Cupid's face is unusual for Prud'hon's manner and quite unlike the blank, unemotional faces of his other models, especially that of Friendship in *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20). This 'ugly' emotion puts Prud'hon outside the neoclassic guidelines prescribed by Winckelmann.²³ It shows Prud'hon places more importance on conveying the message of the cruelty of love rather than adhering to the standards of Neoclassicism.²⁴ It is also interesting to consider Prud'hon's friend and fellow artist, Naigeon and his work *Hymen Burning the Flesh of Cupid* (Figure 26).²⁵ Naigeon, also from Dijon and sponsored by Joursanvault, completed this work between 1781-4. Both Prud'hon's and Naigeon's works have the similar theme of punishing or entrapping love. Naigeon's work is more cruel, with Hymen wielding a brand which he is about to use on Cupid. The message that

²¹ Boucher, *Venus Disarms Love*. Boucher had numerous Venus/Cupid scenes – of this particular painting he had completed two different compositions in the Louvre 1748, and Fontainebleau, after 1744. Charles Joseph Natoire, *Beauty Relights the Flame of Love*, 1739, Versailles, oil on canvas.

²² But it was accepted as a by-product of love.

²³ See p. 80.

²⁴ This sinister aspect of love is continued in other works, such as *Innocence and Love*, and *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* where love appears to be embracing Innocence, but in the process is actually restraining her.

²⁵ Naigeon, *Hymen Burning the Flesh of Cupid*, 1781-4, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, oil on canvas.

one tries to control love in order to avoid pain is also similar. It is highly likely that Naigeon's work influenced Prud'hon, not only in the subject matter but, also in the stylistic similarities, because they had the same instructor, Devosge. *Hymen Burning the Flesh of Cupid* was also made in Dijon, at the time Prud'hon was at the *École des Beaux Arts*. The message from Prud'hon's and Naigeon's works is that Cupid – that is to say love – takes pleasure in the pain he causes and this is in contrast to such idealised compositions about love, as Watteau's *Embarkation to Cythera* (Figure 1).²⁶ Knowing Prud'hon's admiration for Rubens, it is also possible that Prud'hon was inspired by Rubens's *Cupid Making His Bow* (Figure 27).²⁷ Rubens depicts Cupid as an adolescent and holding a large, sharp knife to carve his bow. Two *putti* sit behind him in sadness and terror, for Cupid is about to strike down unsuspecting people with his bow and arrow. Rubens's work provides a sense of foreboding – no action has yet taken place, but it is obvious to the viewer that Cupid is not the angelic god he seems to be. This is enhanced by the shining blade of the knife, Cupid's muscled, rather than chubby body, and his direct gaze at the viewer. Prud'hon, Naigeon, and Rubens are all addressing Cupid's role as a hunter, rather than a bringer of love, by focusing on the crueller aspects of Cupid's character.

In these two works, Prud'hon addresses some of the major issues concerning allegory particularly immediate understanding.²⁸ Despite Prud'hon's works being allegories, the meaning of the painting can be grasped easily, owing to the simplicity of the allegories

²⁶ Although Naigeon's picture shows Hymen inflicting cruelty on Cupid, Hymen is associated with love as the god of marriage ceremonies.

²⁷ Peter Paul Rubens, *Cupid Making His Bow*, 1614, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, oil on canvas, 142 x 108.

²⁸ See p. 57.

and the universal messages he is recounting: those of love and heartbreak. Prud'hon has also addressed the problems of the doctrine of *Ut Pictura Poesis* – showing multiple moments of narrative in one scene. Rather than confuse the viewer, Prud'hon has chosen to split the narrative into two separate scenes. In this instance, Prud'hon is not reinforcing the theory of the *Ut Pictura Poesis* stereotype. Instead he is showing the unique benefits of painting: the ability to convey narrative using only gesture, colour and expression. While these pictures did not catapult Prud'hon into fame, they did establish his reputation as a print artist, and allowed him a reasonable living.

The Union of Love and Friendship (1793)

Throughout his life, friendship was deeply valued by Prud'hon, and this can be seen in his correspondence. It was his friends that gave Prud'hon solace from his unhappy marriage and career woes. 'C'est votre tendre amitié, mon ami, que je veux dire, qui, fertile à m'imaginer des besoins et à s'inquiéter de ma situation, craint qu'à cet égard je ne lui déguise la vérité'.²⁹ Therefore, it is not surprising that Prud'hon chose to represent the beauty of friendship and its charms of 'la franchise, la sincérité, la bonté de votre cœur' in his painting *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20).³⁰ The work was commissioned by Saint-Marc Didot, and critics cannot agree whether this work is unfinished or not.³¹ This painting obviously depicted a subject close to his heart, as the

²⁹ Prud'hon in a letter to friend Fauconnier. Icard, p. 299.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 300.

³¹ See Sam Sachs II, 'Prud'hon's L'Union de L'Amour et de l'Amitié: A New Classical Allegory, *Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin*, 54, 1965, p. 5. He believes it is highly likely there is a second version due to inconsistencies between several biographers' records of the painting.

painting remained in Prud'hon's possession until his death.³² *The Union of Love and Friendship* shows an ephebe (Love) with his arm around a bare breasted woman (Friendship). At Friendship's hip is a *putto*.

This work is the complete opposite of his other moral allegories, such as *Love Laughs at the Tears He Causes*, as it is a celebratory allegory of the positive aspects of the human condition, rather than the negative.³³ Prud'hon's choice of subject matter is an unusual one. Traditionally Love and Friendship are not depicted together, as they are considered opposites – friendship lasts while love is fleeting.³⁴ Nevertheless, this work shows Prud'hon was not completely accepting of traditional allegorical subsets, and was willing to play around with his subjects. Initially this painting appears straightforward – the title reveals that it depicts love and friendship. However, interpretation of this work varies from scholar to scholar. Anita Brookner has suggested the work is an allegory within an

³² Laveissière, p. 69. However, E. Goncourt states that the painting did go into Didot's possession, most likely post-humously, then to a Monsieur Vautier for seven thousand francs. Edmond de Goncourt, *Catalogue Raisonné de l'oeuvre Peint, Dessiné et Gravé de P. P. Prud'hon*, Paris, p. 135.

³³ While the subject matter seems to clearly suggest a moral allegory, there has been some debate over whether it contains political undertones. Elizabeth Menon suggests *The Union of Love and Friendship* is addressing the political climate in France at the time of painting. Menon contemplates the painting's unfinished state, and speculates whether Prud'hon rushed to finish it for the 1793 Salon. In particular, the Terror had begun, and Prud'hon's subject matter, of friendship and love could certainly be considered a call for reconciliation, not dissimilar to the message in David's *The Sabine Women*. If Prud'hon were politically motivated, then this work is significant, because it precedes *The Sabine Women* by six years. While many of David's works have been interpreted as having political messages, *The Sabine Women* was the first work of his to address a particular contemporary event in an allegorical way by using an episode from Roman history to draw analogies to the in-fighting within the Republic. This could mean that Prud'hon influenced David, and that their art has more in common than originally thought. Rather than an overt reference to the government, Prud'hon could be advocating the Jacobins' strong belief in domestic morality. However, when considering the general purpose of Prud'hon's art, most of his works do not have a strong political purpose. Even Prud'hon's political allegories (see p. 138) do not directly support a particular governing body, but rather emphasise the doctrines associated with that body. I believe *The Union of Love and Friendship* is not a political allegory, but a sentimental work for Prud'hon. If a political allegory was the aim, then it is unlikely that Love would have been included, but perhaps the figure of peace would have been more apt.

³⁴ Laveissière, p. 66.

allegory – that Friendship and Love are actually allegories for Painting and Sculpture and supports this theory by stating the marked contrast between the bodies of Love and Friendship.³⁵ The body of Love is very sculptural, in a controposto pose, which is reminiscent of Canova's works. In contrast, Friendship, or Painting, is soft and the sfumato technique of Leonardo is used for the gestural limbs, and the mysterious, dream-like expression of Friendship.³⁶ Elderfield notes Prud'hon uses oppositional poses, like that of Love and Friendship.³⁷ This provides a narrative effect that perhaps makes the allegory easier to understand rather than relying solely on attributes. However, the figure of friendship points to the ground. If the painting is representative of the relationship between Painting and Sculpture, then it would make more sense that Sculpture points to the ground, indicating the physical, three dimensional function of sculpture, and its need for the ground as support. Instead, Menon's explanation of the original reading makes more sense – that Friendship pointing to the ground represents the way friendship is more 'grounded in earthly reality' than the dizzying heights of love.³⁸

While Prud'hon is depicting love, it is not erotic love. In contrast to Girodet's *The Sleep of Endymion*, exhibited the same year, the sexuality and the beauty of Endymion are the message. Prud'hon did not want to make his work overly erotic, as this would distract from the message. Guffey notes that Prud'hon purposefully separates Friendship's breast from overlapping onto Love's chest, by using drapery.³⁹ She also notes that the figures of

³⁵ Brookner, 'Prud'hon's The Union of Love and Friendship', p. 38.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Elderfield, p. 72.

³⁸ Menon, p. 157.

³⁹ Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, pp. 131-132.

Love and Friendship are depicted as teenagers, and therefore are not sexually aggressive.⁴⁰ That perhaps is precisely the appeal of this work, for it 'embodies a universal ideal with no binding ties to a specific relationship between a man and woman'.⁴¹ Elderfield also writes of Prud'hon's tendency to use an 'unthreatening' female subject that is bonded to a male subject.⁴² However, I would suggest the opposite, that the masculine figure is submissive to the female figure. The female figure of Friendship is much bolder than Love, directly addressing the viewer, and she stands out more because of the use of red roses in her hair and the rich blue drapery. The boldness of Friendship could also suggest that Prud'hon places more value on friendship than on love.

The belief that *Union of Love and Friendship* is more personal for Prud'hon can also be supported by Menon's idea the work is a statement of Prud'hon's love for Marie Fauconier, one of Prud'hon's artist friends.⁴³ This can be given more credence because the two allegorical figures are of Friendship and Love, not just love. More importantly the Love depicted is not a sexual love. As a married man, Prud'hon is making the statement that friendship is all he has to offer Marie. Menon also suggests the figures of Love and Friendship could represent Cupid and Psyche, a mythological story of secret and forbidden love.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Love and Friendship do not look at each other, which perhaps reflects the part of the myth where Psyche is not allowed to look upon Cupid's

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

⁴¹ Gordon, p. 261.

⁴² Elderfield, p. 19.

⁴³ Menon, pp. 159-162.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 162. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the current owner of this work, also suggests the allegory is a representation of the myth of Cupid and Psyche. Love is typically represented by Cupid, and is usually winged. The torch, usually an attribute of peace, can be re-interpreted as the torch that Psyche used to illuminate Cupid's features (and thus bringing discord between love and friendship).

face.⁴⁵ Menon attributes a number of meanings to *The Union of Love and Friendship*, which she justifies by saying Prud'hon is showing his interest in 'both the private and public-political side of love and friendship'.⁴⁶ Thus, Prud'hon is able to have his own personal message within the painting, but still meet the requirements of the governmental painting.

In terms of classical influence, *The Union of Love and Friendship* is based on several antique sculptures.⁴⁷ The pose and gesture are sourced from the Capuan Venus sculpture (Figure 28), perhaps explaining the lack of emotion and movement in Friendship's body.⁴⁸ The contraposto pose of Love is reminiscent of Praxiteles' sculpture, the *Apollo Sauroctonos* (Figure 29), which is particularly apt if Brookner's theory that Friendship and Love are representations of Painting and Sculpture is to be given credence.⁴⁹ The main contemporary work that inspired Prud'hon was Pigalle's sculpture of *Love Embracing Friendship* (Figure 30). The iconography of Love and Friendship did not really exist until Ripa's *Iconologia*, which to some extent influenced Pigalle, and it remained obscure. However, the actual idea for Pigalle's sculpture came from Madame du Pompadour, as a way to represent the new, platonic friendship she and the King Louis XV now shared.⁵⁰ Both Prud'hon and Pigalle have chosen to depict a non-threatening Cupid – neither is armed. The warm relationship between Love and Friendship is made obvious, as in

⁴⁵ The story of Cupid and Psyche is told in Apuleius's *Golden Ass*.

⁴⁶ Menon, p. 163.

⁴⁷ Laveissière, p. 66.

⁴⁸ Ibid. *Capuan Venus*, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Naples.

⁴⁹ Roman copy after Praxiteles, *Apollo Sauroctonos* (Apollo the Lizard-Killer), Louvre, c. 1st-2nd A.D., 149 cm.

⁵⁰ Pigalle, *Love Embracing Friendship*, Louvre, 1758, marble, 142 cm.

Pigalle's sculpture they are not only embracing, but gazing deeply into each other's eyes. While Friendship only has one bare breast, there is the implication that the young Cupid is going to nurse from her – that friendship feeds love and that they sustain one another. Gordon sees Prud'hon's reinterpretation of Pigalle's work as the last allegorical representation of Friendship – 'after Prud'hon, it was buried totally and permanently'.⁵¹ However, this is most likely because of the general decline in popularity of the allegory, rather than a disdain for friendship as a subject matter.

Prud'hon, sometimes referred to as 'the French Correggio', may also have been influenced by this sixteenth century Italian artist. Correggio's *The School of Love* (Figure 31) shows seated Mercury, with baby Cupid at his side. To the left is Venus, who is standing, with drapery modestly covering her lower body. This close-knit group of three figures is similar to that depicted by Prud'hon, whose Friendship also has a covered lower body, with her arm angled and in the same position as Correggio's Venus. Both Correggio's Venus and Prud'hon's Friendship stare out toward the viewer. Correggio frames his trio in a woodland setting, with a tree branch directly behind the heads of the figures. Prud'hon also uses a woodland setting, and a tree branch above the figures' heads. Brookner notes the influence of Leonardo on Friendship's 'religious knees, her pointing finger and her dreamy, withdrawn gaze' from the works *Virgin of the Rocks* (Figure 32) and *St. John the Baptist* (Figure 33).⁵² Undoubtedly, Leonardo influenced Prud'hon, and this is particularly evident in Prud'hon's work *Venus, Hymen and Cupid* (Figure 34), which in terms of theme and composition is very similar to *The Union of*

⁵¹ Gordon, p. 262.

⁵² Brookner, 'Prud'hon's The Union of Love and Friendship', p. 38.

Love and Friendship.⁵³ *The Union of Love and Friendship*, dated shortly after *Venus, Hymen and Cupid*, shows Prud'hon's experimentation with Leonardo's techniques, but rather than a slavish imitation, in the final painting Prud'hon only takes several elements from Leonardo in order to develop his own style.

What is most significant about this work is not its contemporary reception, but its reception by today's art historians. *The Union of Love and Friendship*, hardly Prud'hon's most famous work, has been commented on in articles by Menon, Brookner and Sam Sachs (II). Primarily, it is the many different ways of interpreting the allegory which these critics find so fascinating. This may be because there is so little contemporary comment on this work, making the meaning highly debatable for modern critics.⁵⁴ As Prud'hon's first painting admitted to the Salon, *The Union of Love and Friendship* is significant in Prud'hon's establishing a career in fine arts, and led to his first significant commission, *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth*.

⁵³ *Venus, Hymen and Cupid* is probably an early study for *The Union of Love and Friendship*. However, it becomes obvious that not all aspects of Leonardo's style suited Prud'hon. *Venus, Hymen and Cupid* uses extensive *sfumato* to the point where the skin of the figures is dark, and decomposing looking. Venus' face seems disconnected from her body, her face too large, and too pale in comparison to the rest of the body. Prud'hon even attempts to use the same medium employed by Leonardo – oil on wood. *Venus, Hymen and Cupid* in particular resembles the Burlington House Cartoon – a study for Mary, Christ and St. Anne at the National Gallery.

⁵⁴ I could not find any Salon reviews for this work. However it is commented on by early Prud'hon biographers.

Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth (1799)

Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth (Figure 21) is a painting that almost never existed.⁵⁵ While this work was significant in the advancement of Prud'hon's career, in terms of artistic merit it received mixed reviews. His drawing for *Wisdom and Truth Descending* won the *Concours de l'II* (1794) and he received five thousand francs in commission for the painting, as well as a studio at the Louvre.⁵⁶ The final composition, exhibited in 1799, greatly impressed art dealer Le Brun, who placed him number six out of the ten best painters, sculptors and architects.⁵⁷ A number of biographers mention the intense jealousy directed towards Prud'hon on receiving such an honour. David's students, in particular, resented this 'vignette painter' who was posing as a history painter.⁵⁸ The composition of *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth* is simple, with two female figures hovering in the air, the one on the right clothed and the other on the left completely nude. The nude figure to the left is the allegorical representation of Truth. She is traditionally represented – nude and unadorned – to show that the nature of truth has nothing to hide and needs no embellishment.⁵⁹ Truth is typically paired with Time – the idea that truth will eventually be revealed in time. However, Prud'hon has paired Truth with Wisdom suggesting with truth comes wisdom. Wisdom is depicted by Minerva, the goddess who is usually associated with that virtue. Truth is shown with none of her usual

⁵⁵ The drawing of this work was entered by Copia, not Prud'hon.

⁵⁶ Laveissière, p. 167.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 22. In order of rank: David, Ménageot, Gérard, Vincent.

⁵⁸ Forest, p. 68.

⁵⁹ Hall, p. 312.

attributes, in particular the sun.⁶⁰ Instead, Prud'hon has chosen to depict an overcast sky that is dissipating as Wisdom and Truth descend. The narrative of the painting is contained in the gesture of the figures: Truth is hesitant and reaching upwards, while Wisdom holds her closely and points her towards earth. It is not an outstanding work in Prud'hon's *oeuvre*. The colours are muted, almost washed out, and despite the picture depicting movement, the figures are still, and their gestures contrived. Friedlaender also notes that the figures lack the conviction and strength one would expect from strong morals – 'they are lost in the surrounding atmosphere and appear affected and somewhat helpless'.⁶¹ Chaussard, a contemporary critic, described the composition as 'simple mais froide'.⁶² Chaussard uses the same criticism of 'froide' for the allegory itself.⁶³ Worse still, 'La Vérité à l'air précieux, et la Sagesse a l'air commun. On voit que l'auteur ne s'est point assez nourri de l'antique'.⁶⁴ He credits Prud'hon with having 'rares talents, par sa modestie et par le charme de son pinceau. However, Bruun-Neergaard described the work as 'la plus belle peinture que Prud'hon eut faite jusqu'à ce moment'.⁶⁵ More admiration came from Voiart: 'On y admirait la poésie de la pensée et de la composition, la grâce des formes, le charme et de couleur et du pinceau'.⁶⁶ At the Salon, Prud'hon was up against the much praised *Return of Marcus Sextus* by Guérin, and Prud'hon's rather

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Friedlaender, p. 56.

⁶² Chaussard, p. 550.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. However Chaussard had the exact criticism for Hennequin's *Triumph of the French People* – that he needed to study the antique more – p. 549.

⁶⁵ Clément, p. 234. However, Bruun-Neergaard was a friend of Prud'hon.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 234.

mented allegory would have been labelled a failure by those who preferred the masculine and historical composition of David's school.⁶⁷

Prud'hon was inspired by Poussin's *Time Protects Truth From Envy and Discord* (Figure 35).⁶⁸ There is, of course, the similarity in subject matter, and Prud'hon also chose to place his composition into an oval, like Poussin. Prud'hon's composition is much simpler, and neither reflects the rich colours of Poussin, nor the muscled figures. The iconographical interpretation of this work can easily be related to France's political situation. The Revolution has brought Truth to France. Her companion, Wisdom, can be seen as representing the governing revolutionary bodies that brought about the change. Laveissière states that this work represents 'eternal values'.⁶⁹ This is the marked difference between the morality depicted in David's work, and that in Prud'hon's. David's values of heroism, patriotism and masculinity are ultimately transitory, while Prud'hon's virtues of love and truth go beyond this world. Despite the mixed reception, *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth* ultimately gave Prud'hon the right to call himself a history painter.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ However, it can also be said that Guérin's painting is an allegory of the return of French émigrés.

⁶⁸ Nicolas Poussin, *Time Protects Truth From Envy and Discord*, 1641, Louvre, oil on canvas. This was noted at the time of exhibition by Chaussard, p. 550.

⁶⁹ Laveissière, p. 234.

⁷⁰ Delacroix, p. 436.

Hôtel de Lannoy Salon (1798-1801)

The Hôtel de Lannoy decorations, which Prud'hon undertook from 1798-1801, were his largest work to date and perhaps his most ambitious allegorical work. The Hôtel de Lannoy was owned by Marc-Antoine Joseph de Lannoy, an army contractor - one of the rising bourgeois who were able to buy up national property.⁷¹ The decorative salon, named the Salon de la Richesse, is no longer in existence, but disassembled parts can be found in a private collection in New York, as well as the Louvre. The decorative scheme consisted of four main allegorical friezes: Arts (Figure 36), Wealth (Figure 37), Pleasure (Figure 38) and Philosophy (Figure 39), with minor friezes of the three fates, sphinxes and two Pegasus horses. Each of the main friezes uses a female figure on a plinth to depict an allegory, with *putti* in a quasi bas relief under the plinth to further emphasise the allegory above. The Salon was 9.6 metres by 11.2 metres and had two of the main friezes, Pleasure and Philosophy on the north wall, with the other two friezes, Wealth and Arts, directly opposite on the south wall. The sheer number of elements in the room make it unlikely that Prud'hon worked alone, but Prud'hon had spent a significant amount of time planning for this monumental task, making many preparatory drawings and cartoons, some of which can now be found in the Metropolitan Museum.

⁷¹ The Hotel de Lannoy was situated on Rue Cerrutti (today known as Rue Lafitte). After Lannoy it passed into the hands of Hortense, daughter of Josephine. It was re-sold several times before being demolished in 1890. Colin Eisler, 'Three Rediscovered Prud'hon Cartoons for the Salon de la Richesse at the Hôtel de Lannoy', *Drawing* 18, Winter 1996-1997, pp. 71-74.

Shortly after its completion, Bruun-Neergaard commented on the allegorical significance of each of the panels. What his work reveals is an extremely complex series of allegories within allegories, with each of the main friezes interacting with each other. Bruun Neergard instead holds the opinion that Prud'hon's depictions for the Arts (Figure 36) are all aspects of poetry.

The Arts are represented by Euterpe, the Muse of lyric poetry...the muse, whose head is crowned with laurel, plucks the strings of a lyre. The spirit of painting above her presents a picture to the Spirit of Wealth. At the bottom is the spirit of poetry mediating on verse. He holds an inkwell and pen to transcribe his ideas. This Spirit is surrounded by attributes related to the various sorts of poetry: namely a lyre for lyric poetry; reed pipes for pastoral poetry; a laurel crown for heroic poetry; a mask for satiric poetry, which usually works in darkness; bluebells and a butterfly for ephemeral poetry, dandelion seeds for the hope that deludes poets and artists; and a *bursa pastoris* as symbol of indigence.⁷²

Wealth (Figure 37) is again represented by a woman in a rich green cloak with gold embroidery around the edges, and what hints to be a silk gown underneath. She holds a golden circlet in one hand, and a box of jewels in the other. Above her is one *putto* holding a necklace, and below another holding a necklace and sceptre, with cornucopiae on each side over spilling with gold coins. This second *putto* is notable, for unlike the other, it has different and unusual wings – puffy and almost cloud-like. The texture of the wings is mirrored by the texture of the cornucopiae, which heightens the feeling of luxury. Bruun-Neergaard explains *Wealth* in the following way:

Wealth is depicted by a figure leaning on a table, the foot of which represents Plutus.... She (wealth) turns her head toward the Arts and presents her with a gold crown, the double reward for her merit. A Spirit holds a chain of the same metal, chiefly intended for the Spirit of Painting. At the bottom is a spirit of wealth between two cornucopias...in one hand he holds a sceptre, the symbol of his power, which one hopes he will always put to good use; in the other, a necklace, with which he seems to

⁷² Laveissière, p. 141.

be attracting Pleasure. At his side are poppies, symbols of the satiety often felt in the midst of abundance.⁷³

Bruun-Neergaard's description shows the uniformity of each frieze – each contains one main figure with two minor figures above and below. For each frieze, the attributes are paramount for interpretation and the complexity is enhanced by the use of the language of flowers. Pleasure (Figure 38) slightly varies from the formula, in that it has four figures, rather than the requisite three. Pleasure, a winged female with her upper body exposed, is hugging a cupid. The cupid below has a bow and arrow directed at the viewer. The cupid above, unlike the one below holds no attributes. Bruun-Neergaard states Pleasure is represented by Venus, and this would explain the presence of her son, Cupid, who is larger than the other generic *putti*. Venus is crowned with myrtle, one of her attributes, and the other flowers below are roses and lilacs with thorns 'symbols of the charms that attract us to pleasure, and of the regret that usually follows'.⁷⁴ *Philosophy* (Figure 39) is represented by a well draped woman, holding a statue. Above is a *putto* holding a torch, and below, a *putto* is leaning against a statue of a many-breasted woman, a fertility goddess. Unlike the other friezes, Bruun-Neergaard clearly cannot claim the woman is Minerva, because she is holding a statue of Minerva – who has the typical attributes of the spear, breast plate and crested helmet. Four overdoors into the Salon feature friezes depicting the times of day: Morning, Noon (Figure 40), Afternoon (Figure 41) and Evening (Figure 42). While these overdoors were more light-hearted than the main panels, they still had the same measure of allegorical complexity. Bruun-Neergaard, who discussed the meaning of these doors with Prud'hon, wrote:

⁷³ Laveissière, p. 141. Plutus is the god of wealth.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Morning (on the same side as Wealth) is expressed by a Venus at her toilette, with cupids presenting her with a mirror and jewels to adorn her beauty. Noon (on the same side as the Arts) [is represented] by a woman at her bath, in the company of two spirits playing music. Afternoon [is represented] by a figure of Reading accompanied by two Spirits, one which is concerned with Sciences, while the other thinks only of playing....Evening [is represented] by a sleeping woman. A cupid can be seen resting between her legs and another on her breast.⁷⁵

Prud'hon maintains consistency with the main panels by also having one main allegorical figure accompanied by cupids. However, the overdoors have greater emphasis on leisure activities, such as reading and music, than those found in the main friezes. Unlike the main frieze counterparts, the overdoor figures are languid and nude, with the exception of Afternoon. The overdoors provide relief from the seriousness and complexity of the main friezes – they can be enjoyed for their aesthetics, without knowing the allegorical underpinnings.

The overall significance of the decorative scheme is important. Brookner suggests the theme of the room is 'Time and Age will overtake us, let us enjoy the good things of life while we may'.⁷⁶ Her evidence for this is based on the masks of Time and Age set between the friezes. I would agree with this explanation, as the pleasurable aspects of the decoration make the Salon a place where one can forget about these things and enjoy oneself in the present. The masks are merely a reminder that once one leaves the Salon, one has to go back to the real world, where time and age will affect them. Furthermore, the Salon had an even more important role to play. While the Salon de la Richesse reflected the status and wealth of Lannoy, it also functioned at a higher level. First of all,

⁷⁵ Bruun-Neergaard in Laveissière, p. 144. The Morning overdoor is now lost.

⁷⁶ Brookner 'Prud'hon: Master Decorator of the Empire', p. 194.

a salon is a gathering place, which in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries symbolised a place for enlightened discussion.⁷⁷ This particular salon, in a hotel, would be the meeting place for extremely wealthy guests. The subjects on the walls reflect the guests themselves; riches symbolising their wealth; pleasure which they are obtaining at that very moment by socialising in the Salon and by their stay at the Hotel; wisdom which they can achieve by the discussions in the Salon and arts which they are appreciating merely by being in the Salon. However, there are also modern influences present in the Salon. Rousseau, in his 1749 *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* wrote: 'Luxury is seldom unattended by the arts and sciences and they are always attended by luxury'.⁷⁸ Rousseau meant this as criticism of the degeneracy of the arts but it is unclear whether Prud'hon took this to heart, resenting the fact that he was consigned to produce art for the wealthy. Prud'hon shows wealth alongside the arts, making a clear statement that wealth provides for the arts, but arts sustain wealth by providing pleasure and wisdom. The Salon de la Richesse is also a form of escapism – the immense decorative scheme and complex allegories mean a viewer would have to take their time contemplating and viewing the Salon, which in effect “transports” them to another realm because the decoration surrounds them. Brookner states that the Salon de la Richesse ‘might well have been (one of) two of the most important interiors of the entire Consulate Period and, indeed, adumbrate the full Empire style of which he was one of France’s greatest exponents’.⁷⁹ Prud'hon's work, while no longer *in situ*, was completed at the height of *le Style Directoire*. This is important because there are no complete surviving

⁷⁷ Note Madame de Stael's famous literary salons.

⁷⁸ Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Arts and Sciences', 1749, *Art in Theory 1648-1815*, p. 438.

⁷⁹ Brookner, 'Master Decorator', p. 194.

interiors in *le Style Directoire*. Even though Prud'hon's Salon de la Richesse still needs a lot of interpretation because it is no longer intact, it shows that interior design had an important place outside Napoleonic circles.⁸⁰

These works, while extremely admirable for their complex allegorical scheme, are perhaps deserving of some of the main criticisms of allegory.⁸¹ The allegorical signage that Prud'hon uses is so immense, and so intertwined, that comprehension in one look would have been extremely difficult. The fact that each of the four allegories has an immense array of attributes means a viewer would need not only a detailed understanding of the allegorical process, but also an in-depth classical knowledge in order to recognise the various types of poetry, as well as an understanding of floral language. However, the Salon catered to those who would have been highly knowledgeable in those areas. With twenty-first century eyes, it is impossible to gauge the understanding of something that seems so complex to us. Prud'hon directly addresses the issue of *Ut Pictura Poesis* in the Salon de la Richesse. He is essentially trying to depict each type of poetry through visual means, rather than through language, which was considered by Lessing an intrusion into the poet's domain. These works are also very traditional and are based around the idea of *trompe-l'oeil* – an attempt to deceive the viewer into believing the objects are three dimensional, rather than two dimensional.⁸² *Trompe l'oeil* was popular in classical times,

⁸⁰ Chilvers (ed.), 'Directoire Style', *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 163.

⁸¹ See p. 57.

⁸² Ibid., p. 566.

as well as during the Renaissance.⁸³ Essentially Prud'hon is deceiving the viewer on two fronts – by using *trompe-l'oeil* and the use of allegory itself. However, Prud'hon's use of the *trompe-l'oeil* is far more significant when placed into context. Recent discoveries had revealed Pompeii and Herculaneum to the world. Wall paintings in both these towns have revealed the ancients' disposition for the *trompe-l'oeil*. In particular, the frescos at the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor (Figure 43) have fake columns and landscapes in order to make the viewer think they are looking out a window.⁸⁴ If this point is considered, Prud'hon's use of *trompe-l'oeil* is merely a response to the Neoclassical fashions of the time, rather than an intentional deception of the viewer. More importantly, the purpose of the Salon was to transport the viewer to another time and place, meaning the *trompe-l'oeil* is necessary to complete the experience. Despite the Salon de Lannoy no longer being in existence, it remains significant as Prud'hon's first decorative work, and was probably the most important commission he had to date. However, the majesty of the Salon de Lannoy was soon to be eclipsed by Prud'hon's *chef d'oeuvre*.

Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime (1804)

Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime (Figure 13) is Prud'hon's best known work, and the one that earned him the most acclaim. *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* depicts the allegorical figures, Justice and Vengeance, swooping down on a thief and

⁸³ Note particularly Pompeian friezes, such as those found at the Villa of Publius Sinister – where architectural details are painted on the wall to give the illusion of space.

⁸⁴ Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, Boscoreale, 40-30 B.C.

murderer, who has left his victim behind. *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* was exhibited at the 1808 Salon and the *Journal de l'Empire* wrote of the painting in detail:

Le meurtrier a surpris sa victime durant la nuit, dans un lieu sauvage, couvert de tous côtés par des rochers qui lui semblaient inaccessibles.... mais la Justice qui recherche, manifeste, juge, punit les crimes, est prête à le saisir. Cette seconde partie de la composition est rendue par deux figures allégoriques planant au-dessus du lieu où le meurtre a été commis : l'une, le bras étendu pour saisir, et un flambeau à la main; l'autre qui tient des balances, et un glaive prêt à frapper.⁸⁵

Prud'hon was inspired at a dinner party when he heard a quote from Horace: 'raro antecedentum scelstum deseruit pede Poena claudo'.⁸⁶ This inspiration from poetry is a clear indication of the continuing influence of the theory of *Ut Pictura Poesis*. Despite creating his painting around a piece of poetry, *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* was special in that it was unique for the time and encapsulated a number of emotions in the one canvas.

La Justice Divine est la tentative, la plus sérieuse, la plus sévère, la plus élevée qu'ait faite Prud'hon, et il ne s'est autant préoccupé d'aucun autre de ses ouvrages....le paysage, austère et grandiose, d'une invention très originale, très-frappante, encadre admirablement cette scène lugubre et ajoute à la terreur qu'elle inspire....la double lumière de la lune et du flambeau de la Vengeance les éclaire, comme le reste du tableau, de lueurs étranges et sinistres.⁸⁷

Diderot's complaints that allegory was cold and obscure are trumped in *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* Firstly the allegory Prud'hon depicts is not cold. As the quote above shows, Prud'hon's painting had the ability to evoke terror and pathos in the viewer. This is perhaps why *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* is Prud'hon's most famous work – it

⁸⁵ Jean-Baptiste Boutard, 'Salon de 1808', *Journal de L'Empire*, 3 November, Paris, Imprimerie de Lenormant, 1808, p. 3.

⁸⁶ 'Rarely has Retribution with her lame foot left the track of the guilty though he be far ahead'. Helen Weston, 'Prud'hon: Justice and Vengeance', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 117, No. 867. (June, 1975), p. 354.

⁸⁷ Clément, p. 347.

manages to clearly evoke a response from an audience. In addition, Prud'hon is not using an obscure allegory – the concepts of justice and vengeance would have been evident to most, as they were relatively well-known and well-used allegorical figures. Furthermore, Prud'hon would have appeased Du Bos's concerns by including the description in the *livret*, essentially 'inscriptions' for the characters.

Prud'hon's painting is often seen as a pre-cursor to Romanticism, for several reasons. The highly emotive nature of the painting with the macabre, almost gothic mood is evocative of Romanticism. *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* also shows the growing importance of individuality in the artist. While still an allegory, and a classically-based painting, Prud'hon shows some interesting developments in this work. Much attention has been paid to the landscape and in some aspects, the landscape itself is a character, because it provides the tension and atmosphere in the painting – the desolate landscape highlights the inhumanity of the crime, and the full moon essentially illuminates the crime for Justice and Vengeance to see. Prud'hon's work was well received because of these 'Romantic' elements. The critic, Boutard wrote:

L'artiste a voulu qu'il contribuât à la terreur nécessaire dont est rempli le lieu auquel il est destiné....Le site est bien composé, bien exécuté; les effets et les accidents de la lumière, de la lune et du flambeau, bien ménagés.⁸⁸

Certain elements of *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* can be seen later with the advent of Romanticism. The dramatic lighting, and the elongation of limbs, especially evident on the corpse, can be seen in the quintessential Romantic work, Géricault's *Raft of the*

⁸⁸ Boutard in *Journal des Débats*, quoted in 'La Justice et la Vengeance Poursuivant le Crime par Pierre-Paul Prud'hon', *L'Art Pour Tous*, no. 653, 1887, p. 2709.

Medusa. In terms of personal style, *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* is more of an anomaly, as it contains all of the passion and drama that his other works lack.⁸⁹ *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* also features a violence that is not seen in any other of Prud'hon's works. It is these elements of the painting, 'the way everything in the scene is suffused with a sense of dread [that marks] the transmission of the French tradition of romantic horror in the nineteenth century'.⁹⁰

Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime has several layers of allegorical meaning. The immediate moral message is clear: justice will be served; immoral behaviour will not be tolerated. However, *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* is not only important in terms of moral allegory, but it also can function as a historical painting. First of all, this painting has very strong links to the Napoleonic justice system. It was commissioned by Frochot, Prefect of the Seine, to be housed in the Palais de Justice.⁹¹ The placement of the painting dictated the subject matter. In 1804, Napoleon began instituting what is generally known as the *Code Napoleon*.⁹² Most critics believe *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* is a representation of the new justice system, an 'effective allegory consisting of alleged Criminal, Victim, Judge and Executioner'.⁹³ *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* functions as

⁸⁹ Gautier in 1857 cited *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* as well as *Christ on the Cross* as Prud'hon's best known works. Theodore Gautier, 'Galerie Française au Musée du Louvre', *L'Artiste*, Series 5, T. 7, 1851, p. 8.

⁹⁰ Norbert Wolf, *Romanticism*, Cologne, Taschen, 2007, p. 34.

⁹¹ It was in the Salle des Assises until 1815, when it was replaced by a religious work. It now resides in the Louvre. Edmond de Goncourt, *Catalogue Raisonné de l'oeuvre Peint, Dessiné et Gravé de P. P. Prud'hon*, p. 165.

⁹² The *Code Napoleon* is distinct from any other legal changes made during the Revolution, as it focused on civil law, rather than constitutional law, Jonathan P. Ribner, *Broken Tablets: The Cult of Law in French Art from David to Delacroix*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, p. 30.

⁹³ Boime, *Bonapartism*, p. 77.

a 'super' allegory – it features multiple types of allegories.⁹⁴ As well as a historical allegory of the Code Napoleon, *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* also functions as a quasi allegorical portrait, for while Napoleon is not physically present, his ideas and values are expressed in the canvas. The work also shows personification of abstract ideas, and thus fits into the allegory as the doctrine category, as it promotes law and justice. The moral message of *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* would have been particularly appealing, as it allowed him to express some of the revolutionary sentiment of the *Commune des Arts*, even though Revolutionary times were over.

Another suggested source for Prud'hon's painting is the biblical tale of Cain and Abel. However, while Prud'hon was raised in a religious environment, the stories themselves are rarely projected into his works. He did not mind visual references to biblical paintings, and the arms of the victim, extended like a cross, show the reference to Jesus on the cross.⁹⁵ Prud'hon preferred to turn to the classics for inspiration, and therefore another suggestion by Weston, that the face of the criminal is based on a bust of tyrant emperor Caracalla (Figure 44), is much more likely, particularly considering several busts of Caracalla can be found in the Louvre.⁹⁶ Another possible classical influence is that of Raphael. Prud'hon had previously expressed his admiration for this artist and without doubt would have seen Raphael's *Stanza d'Elidoro*, a decorated apartment at the Vatican.⁹⁷ The flying figures of Justice and Vengeance bear remarkable similarities to the

⁹⁴ As described by Goran Hermeren earlier.

⁹⁵ Clément, p. 348.

⁹⁶ Weston has made the connection between Caracalla likeness and the Cain and Abel story – Caracalla, like Cain, killed his own brother, Geta, 'Prud'hon: Justice and Vengeance', p. 361.

⁹⁷ See p.88.

figures of Saints Peter and Paul, in Raphael's *Pope Leo I Repulsing Attila* (Figure 45) who hovers over the battlefield with swords to divinely help Leo to defeat Attila.⁹⁸ Weston has also noted the fleeing figure's resemblance to Poussin's *Woman Taken In Adultery* (Figure 46), especially in pose and drapery.⁹⁹ Despite the seemingly Romantic tendencies of this work, the majority of influences come from classical and Renaissance art.

What is puzzling about Prud'hon's *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13) is the interaction between the figures. From Prud'hon's own description, the criminal is not aware of Justice and Vengeance.¹⁰⁰ Therefore it seems Prud'hon is committing the cardinal sin so hated by Diderot of mixing real and allegorical figures. While at first glance, Justice and Vengeance are purely allegorical figures, and the criminal is a real figure, the title mentions 'Pursuing Crime', suggesting that the criminal himself is also an allegorical figure.¹⁰¹ In terms of style, *Justice and Divine Vengeance...* is one of Prud'hon's simpler allegories. The personifications of Justice and Vengeance are straight-forward, and the only attributes to indicate Justice's identity is the scale and

⁹⁸ Raphael, *Pope Leo I Repulsing Attila* (also known as *The Meeting of Pope Leo the Great and Attila*), 1513-1514, the Vatican, fresco.

⁹⁹ Weston, 'Prud'hon: Justice and Vengeance', p. 361. Poussin, *Woman Taken in Adultery*, 1653, Louvre, oil on canvas. Prud'hon had already shown his affinity for Poussin's works in *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth*, an adaption of Poussin's *Time Protects Truth From Envy and Discord*.

¹⁰⁰ This was the accompanying description Prud'hon when displayed at the Salon: 'In a wild and distant spot, covered by the veil of night, the greedy criminal strangles his victim, takes the gold, and looks once more to see if there remains any spark of life which might uncover his crime. The thoughtless one! He did not see that Nemesis, that terrible handmaiden of Justice, follows, and, like a vulture dropping on its prey, soon will catch him and hand him over to her unyielding companion'. Friedlaender, p. 57.

¹⁰¹ The Louvre «Bases des Données» does refer to *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* having 'personnages réels et figures allégoriques', but this can be debated.

http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=22525

sword, that see justice served.¹⁰² Perhaps this simplicity is the reason the work is so appealing to both viewers in Prud'hon's time and today: the message is simple and uncomplicated. The dramatic lighting and heightened emotions make Prud'hon's painting the most significant allegorical composition in Napoleonic times, if not the entire nineteenth century. This is because Prud'hon's work functions not only as a historical painting and moral lesson, but it also provides a tangible link to the past while showing the future of jurisprudence in France. *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* earned Prud'hon the Legion of Honour, as well as the fee of fourteen thousand francs.¹⁰³

Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows (1809)

Just like *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* (Figure 24); *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* (Figure 47) is about the cruelty of love. This work shows four figures in a woodland forest. In the centre is Love represented by Cupid, traditionally shown with wings, and his bow and arrows.¹⁰⁴ He embraces Innocence, who is still modestly clothed. However, her garments are being pulled on by a *putto* who is representing pleasure. Behind Cupid, and slightly obscured by his wings is Remorse, downcast, with her hands to her head – a traditional way of indicating distress. The order of the figures is extremely important. The viewer's eyes are drawn from left to right – the same path that the figures are taking. Love, Innocence and Pleasure's feet are all headed in the same direction. The viewer's eyes, almost as if an afterthought, are drawn to

¹⁰² James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, London, Murray, 1975, pp. 183-4.

¹⁰³ Clément, p. 344.

¹⁰⁴ The painted version is unfinished, and the arrows have not been painted in – however they are clearly present in preparatory drawings.

Remorse last, due to her concealment. This progression is important because ultimately Remorse is what is left behind, after Innocence, Pleasure and Love are gone. Like *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes*, *Love Seduces Innocence*, *Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* is a warning about falling victim to the sensory emotions of the heart, and ignoring the wisdom of the mind. Prud'hon left notes about the painting in a sketch book.

He wrote:

L'Innocence venant à passer des mains de la nature dans les bras de l'amour, celui – cy [lui] détache le bandeau [qui la couvre] qu'elle a sur les yeux [pour] et lui fait envisager le plaisir. L'amour séduit alors l'innocence le plaisir l'entraîne et bien souvent quelques fois le Repentir les suit.¹⁰⁵

Love Seduces Innocence, *Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* lacks the sinister tones of *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* – the viewer does not get the impression that Innocence is an unwilling victim – rather that she has fallen for the seductive charms of Love, who turns her face towards the viewer. She is caught in all ways – Love has his arm around her waist and has one hand possessively on her shoulder. The gesture of Love, his hand touching Innocence's face, is also mildly threatening, as it appears as if he has his hands around her throat. Love's stride is purposeful, while Innocence shows some hesitancy – her back leg seems to be trailing behind while Love's front leg blocks her path. The forest, which provides a foreboding backdrop, dark and angular is leaning in the opposite direction to which the figures are going. Unlike the *Cupid Who Laughs at the Tears He Causes*, the Cupid in *Love Seduces Innocence*, *Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* is fully grown.¹⁰⁶ The figures of Love and Innocence are indebted to

¹⁰⁵ Prud'hon quoted in Laveissière, p. 82. The quotes in brackets are portions that Prud'hon crossed out.

¹⁰⁶ Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 122.

Prud'hon's earlier work of *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20).¹⁰⁷ In both works Love has the same body and the same hair – a knot circled by flowers. Innocence has the same rounded face, with a distant expression.

A precise date cannot be given for this work, as it was never exhibited in any Salon.¹⁰⁸ Therefore little criticism exists on this work. However, Prud'hon's biographer, Houssaye states that Prud'hon takes his pre-occupation with allegory too far in this work:

L'allégorie était la langue que Prudhon (sic) aimait le plus. Il l'aima trop: il faut bien un peu regretter cette fantaisie quelquefois bizarre qui lui inspira des tableaux comme *l'Amour séduit l'innocence, le Plaisir, l'entraîne, le Repentir suit le plaisir*.¹⁰⁹

Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows (Figure 47) lacks the simplicity of Prud'hon's other moral allegories. Instead of his usual allegorical pairings of two, he has four. However, the work is by no means 'bizarre'. *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* aesthetically resembles *The Union of Love and Friendship*, and thematically, the subject matter varies little from *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes*. Part of the problem may be the dating of this work. It seems Prud'hon originally intended this work to be his reception piece for the *Académie*, but it never came to fruition.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ However, if Prud'hon did intend this as his *reçu* piece, then it could be that *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* influenced *The Union of Love and Friendship*.

¹⁰⁸ Laviessière, p. 82. However, a painting with a similar name to this one is mentioned in the budget of 1809-1810.

¹⁰⁹ Houssaye, p. 38.

¹¹⁰ Laveissière, p. 81.

This painting was most likely commissioned by Josephine in 1809, but she was divorced later that year, leaving Prud'hon with no viable market for the work.¹¹¹ It is interesting to contemplate the context in which Josephine commissioned this work. Did she feel some affinity with the characters because of her relationship with Napoleon, and she was the one left remorseful? Or perhaps was she aware the divorce was coming and was suggesting Napoleon was the one seduced by her (an experienced widow) and that he would be remorseful for divorcing her? With four figures, instead of the usual two, this allegory is more complex than *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* (Figure 24) and *Cupid Bound to Reason* (Figure 25) and is perhaps too complex for 'un homme de bon sens'.¹¹² This allegory also seems to focus more on romantic love than any other allegory examined. The reason for both the complexity and the more romantic content may be the influence of Mayer. While *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps and Remorse Follows* (Figure 47) has many of the hallmarks of his earlier work, *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20), there is more physical interaction between the figures, making it a warmer work. Although Prud'hon already focused on the feminine form in his works, Mayer seemed to introduce softness to Prud'hon's works.¹¹³

At the beginning of this section I discussed Katherine Gordon's argument that Prud'hon's allegories were first lacking in specificity of meaning, and second, appealed only to a minority. Of the works that have been examined in this section – *Justice and Divine*

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 89. It was eventually sold to a Monsieur Odiot for 2,650 francs – E. Goncourt is not clear whether this is a posthumous sale. E. Goncourt, p. 141.

¹¹² Diderot, 'Essais', Fried, p. 90 – see p. 57. I am using Fried's translation of 'man of common sense' rather than a direct translation of 'good sense'.

¹¹³ This is particularly evident in other works, such as *Psyche Carried Off by Zephyrs*, and the collaborative work between Mayer and Prud'hon, *A Water Nymph Teased by a Band of Cupids*.

Vengeance Pursuing Crime (Figure 13), *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20) and *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* (Figure 24), show the specificity of Prud'hon's allegories merely by the titles alone. Prud'hon's unwavering focus on depicting certain virtues and vices becomes clear when compared with other allegories by his contemporaries. Allegories of Liberty such as that of Gros' *Allegorical Figure of the French Republic* (Figure 48) are general. Prud'hon uses specific allegories, and usually in pairs, such as Love and Friendship. But instead of depicting an allegory with the expectation that the audience will understand, Prud'hon goes further and cultivates a relationship between the pairs. In *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20) the allegory is not only suggested by attributes or the allegories themselves, but also by the warm gesture of Love's arm around Friendship, and the way their bodies are turned towards each other. As for the claim that Prud'hon's works appealed to a minority, this is applying a modern view to a nineteenth century painter as Prud'hon's fame has failed to carry through into the present. However, during Prud'hon's career, he had a public following from his engravings, such as *Love Bound to Reason* (Figure 25), and a private following through his patrons. The telling factor that shows that Prud'hon was not only appealing to a minority was his commissions for the Napoleonic family – works that would have been seen and admired both publicly and privately. The award of the Legion of Honour confirms Prud'hon's popularity. Moral allegories dominated Prud'hon's life work, as is evident by the smaller number of works in the following categories. Moral allegories allowed Prud'hon a mode of expressing his feelings – his happiness and misfortunes throughout his life. His moral allegories are an artistic form depicting his life; from his idealistic welcome for a new government in *Wisdom and Truth Descending*

to Earth (Figure 21), to his disillusion with love in *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes* (Figure 24).

Figure 20. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *The Union of Love and Friendship*, 1793,

146.5 x 114.3 cm, oil on canvas, The Minneapolis Institute of the Arts

Figure 21. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth*, 1799,

355 x 355 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre

**Figure 22. Jacques-Louis Copia after Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Liberty*, 1794,
15.6 x 9.8 cm, etching and engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France**

**Figure 23. Jean-Baptiste Regnault, *The Genius of France Between Liberty and Death*, 1795,
60 x 49 cm, oil on canvas, Kunsthalle, Hamburg**

**Figure 24. Jacques-Louis Copia after Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Cupid Laughs at the Tears He Causes*,
1793, 24.9 x 32.5 cm, etching, roulette and engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France**

**Figure 25. Jacques-Louis Copia, after Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Cupid Bound to Reason*, 1793, 25.2 x
32.5, etching, roulette and engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,**

**Figure 26. Jean Claude Naigeon, *Hymen Burning the Flesh of Cupid*, 1781-4,
97 x 135 cm, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon,**

**Figure 27. Peter Paul Rubens, *Cupid Making His Bow*, 1614,
142 x 108, oil on canvas, Alte Pinakothek, Munich**

**Figure 28. Capuan Venus, 117-138 A.D.,
210 cm, marble, Museo Nazionale, Naples**

**Figure 29 Roman copy after Praxiteles, *Apollo Sauroktonos*, 2nd Century B.C.,
149 cm, marble, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 30. Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, *Love Embracing Friendship*, 1758,
142 cm, marble, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 31. Correggio, *The School of Love*, c. 1525,
155.6 x 91.4 cm, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London**

**Figure 32. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, 1483-86,
199 x 122 cm, oil on panel, Musée du Louvre**

Figure 33. Leonardo da Vinci, *St. John the Baptist*, c. 1513-1516,
69 x 57 cm, oil on wood, Musée du Louvre

Figure 34. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Venus, Hymen and Cupid*, c. 1793,
44.8 x 33.8 cm, oil on panel, Musée du Louvre



Figure 35. Nicolas Poussin *Time Protects Truth from Envy and Discord*, 1641,
297 cm (diameter), oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre,

Figure 36. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *The Arts*, 1798-1801,
305 x 76 cm, oil on panel, private collection, New York

Figure 37. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Wealth*, 1798-1801,
305 x 76 cm, oil on panel, private collection, New York

**Figure 38. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Pleasure*, 1798-1801,
305 x 76 cm, oil on panel, private collection, New York**

**Figure 39. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Philosophy*, 1798-1801,
305 x 76 cm, oil on panel, private collection, New York**



**Figure 40. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Noon*, 1798-1801,
72 x 141 cm, oil on canvas, private collection, New York**

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**Figure 41. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Afternoon*, 1798-1801,
72 x 141 cm, oil on canvas, private collection, New York**

**Figure 42. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Evening*, 1798-1801,
72 x 141 cm, oil on canvas, private collection, New York**

**Figure 43. Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, mid-first century B.C.,
Boscotrecase, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**

**Figure 44. Bust of Caracalla, 212-215 A.D.,
52 cm, marble, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 45. Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (Raphael), *Pope Leo I Repulsing Attila*, Stanza d'Eliodoro, 750
cm (base), fresco, The Vatican**

**Figure 46. Nicolas Poussin, *Woman Taken Adultery*, c. 1653,
121 x 195 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre**

**Figure 47. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps, and Remorse Follows*, c.
1809, 97.5 x 81.5 cm, oil on canvas, private collection**

Political allegories

For a brief period, during the Revolutionary years, Prud'hon used his artistic talent to depict Revolutionary political allegories. While these embodied the spirit of the revolution, they did not single out a specific hero of the times, but instead emphasised the values that the Revolution embodied: Liberty, Fraternity and Equality. These allegories differ from the moral allegories discussed above, as here Prud'hon is using allegories of a general nature, ones that were particularly well known at this particular time as a result of Revolutionary causes. These works are also less well known because they are categorised as 'minor' arts, as they are prints. In contrast, in the moral allegories' section the majority of works discussed were paintings. The set of works Prud'hon produced in 1794 are significant in that they represent the political situation of France.¹¹⁴ In particular, the works appear to refer to the French Constitutions of 1791 and 1793. Louis XVI was powerless to stop its institution, living under house arrest after his failed attempt to flee the country earlier in the year. The Constitution essentially abolished hereditary powers and titles and declared the equality of all citizens.¹¹⁵ By 1793, a new Constitution was drafted by the Jacobins, who had largely defeated the Girondins. The new Constitution of 1793 never came into effect due to political turmoil. However, citizens such as Prud'hon were aware of the contents, as over two million citizens voted in favor of instituting the

¹¹⁴ The illustrations I have chosen of these works are in their final, engraved and published state, meaning their date is approximately 1798. However, Prud'hon was working on them in various states from 1794.

¹¹⁵ However those with an income below two hundred and fifty francs, and women, were still not allowed to vote. Horne, p. 29.

new Constitution.¹¹⁶ Prud'hon's works were possibly in reaction to the Terror which was at its height from 1793-4, when Prud'hon's prints were published. The Terror involved the mass execution of thousands of 'dissidents', including the King and even Revolutionaries. So the works in this section are the only true evidence we have of Prud'hon's political leanings. After the Republic, Prud'hon never openly revealed his fervour and belief in the way that he did in these political prints. Jules Renouvier described Prud'hon as 'the true painter of French Revolution'.¹¹⁷ While Prud'hon's revolutionary prints were few in number and certainly not the works most commonly associated with the Revolution, he could be distinguished from other allegorical artists by his in-depth knowledge of the concepts, principles and ideas behind them.¹¹⁸

Liberty (1794)

Liberty (Figure 22) was a collaboration between Prud'hon and his engraver, Jacques-Louis Copia. *Liberty*, along with *Equality* (Figure 49) and *Law* (Figure 50) were presented to the *Comité d'Instruction Publique* (Committee of Public Instruction) to celebrate the ratifying of the French Constitution.¹¹⁹ *Liberty* shows a wreathed, bare-breasted figure standing on top of a hydra. Liberty is typically depicted by a bare-breasted woman, so Prud'hon is bowing to convention in this sense. Liberty is cloaked in Hercules' lion skin, indicating the powerful force of Liberty, because Hercules is

¹¹⁶ John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1951. p. 455.

¹¹⁷ Renouvier in 1863. Laveissière, p. 157.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Laveissière, p. 160. The First Constitution was ratified in 1791, the Second, 1793.

renowned for his strength. Liberty holds an axe in one hand, and a broken yoke in the other. The broken yoke denotes freedom and the axe represents the manner in which freedom was obtained – by brute force. Liberty stands on the corpse of a four-headed hydra. This is another allusion to Hercules, who had to kill the hydra as one of his twelve labours.¹²⁰ One of the heads is crowned and represents Tyranny - a more obvious reference to the monarchy. Another head has a mask slipping off to reveal its terrifying face, representing lies. The implication is that Liberty has unveiled the lies and destroyed the tyranny of the monarchy. This is reinforced by the inscription at the bottom of the plate: 'Elle a renversé l'Hydre de la Tyrannie, et brisé le joug du Despotisme'. Despite the relatively complex allegory depicted, Liberty is simply dressed; the composition is clear and uncluttered. The simplicity of the work is reflective of the downfall of lies – truth does not need to hide behind elaboration.

Prud'hon's innovation becomes clear when his work is compared with others of the same subject matter. Antoine Jean Gros' *Allegorical Figure of the Republic* (Figure 48) depicts a larger-than-life Liberty, again bare-breasted.¹²¹ Gros, however, has given Liberty the same attributes as Minerva: the plumed helmet and spear. The only attribute that indicates that the figure is Liberty is the Phrygian cap on top of the spear. Ripa's *Iconologia* advocates, among other things, the use of the Phrygian cap when depicting Liberty: 'The Phrygian cap was that worn by the newly freed slaves of Ancient Rome, and has come to

¹²⁰ Typically the Hydra is described as having nine heads. Perhaps for aesthetic and practical purposes Prud'hon showed four.

¹²¹ Gros, *Allegorical Figure of the Republic*, 1795, Musée National du Château, Versailles, oil on canvas.

be a symbol of Liberty'.¹²² French Revolutionaries adopted the Phrygian cap as a symbol for their Revolution in 1792.¹²³ Yet Prud'hon chooses not to use this symbol in this depiction of Liberty, although he does in a later work, *The French Constitution* (Figure 51). I would suggest the reason for this lies in the stylistic differences between the two works. *The French Constitution* has a much busier composition with a multitude of figures, while *Liberty* is depicting a sole figure. In *The French Constitution*, many more common attributes would have been needed simply for identification purposes. Apart from the Phrygian cap, there are other differences between Gros' and Prud'hon's works. Prud'hon's Liberty is an active figure – she is shown in the moment after she has defeated Tyranny. Her slightly angled pose emphasises the axe in her hand, expertly lightened at the tip to show it glinting in the light. Liberty gains the viewer's attention by her direct gaze and her triumphant pose, with one foot raised on the dead hydra. In contrast, Gros' Liberty is an inactive figure. Despite being dressed for war, she is completely still and posed as if a statue. Gros' figure lacks the elegance of Prud'hon's – Gros' Liberty is awkward and out of proportion, with her feet bigger than her head. Prud'hon reveals his idealism in his work. Like many other artists, he was truly inspired by the ideal of Liberty. This work and *Equality* (Figure 49) and *Law* (Figure 50) are examples of the rare occasion when Prud'hon is influenced by popular art in terms of subject matter. Compositions featuring these values were extremely common during the Revolutionary years, and Prud'hon usually chose more obscure subject matter, such as that in *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20).

¹²² Ripa, pl. 62.

¹²³ Laveissière, p. 161.

Prud'hon's *Liberty* (Figure 22) is his homage to the power of the values of the French Revolution, and more importantly, the influence of liberty on the arts. *Liberty*, as well as the other two prints in the set, probably refers to the 1791 French Constitution which declares:

Liberty to every man to come and go without being subject to arrest or detention, except according to the forms determined by the Constitution; Liberty to every man to speak, write, print, and publish his opinions without having his writings subject to any censorship or inspection before their publication.¹²⁴

The second principle, that one could speak their own opinion without censorship, is crucial to Prud'hon's position as an artist. The prevalence of compositions of the figure Liberty, according to O'Brien, is because 'Liberty found a cult in the art world because of the belief that greater creative freedom inevitably led to greater art'.¹²⁵ Therefore Prud'hon's work can be seen as a celebration not just of the new freedom for all peoples, but of the freedom that artists now had to depict what they wanted. In theory, the Revolution promised artists freedom from governmental patronage and enforced tastes, and this in turn would lead to greater art. However, it soon became clear that artists were still dependent on political patronage, and that they were not immune from censorship. Prud'hon's belief in this artistic freedom is best indicated by the fact that he produced the print independently, free from governmental commission. He then gifted it to a government department, at the height of the Terror, perhaps to show artistic freedom still needed to be recognised despite the climate of fear and oppression.

¹²⁴ Hall Stewart, *The French Constitution of 1791*, 'Fundamental Provisions Guaranteed by the Constitution', Article 3, pp. 231-232.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

***Equality* (1794)**

Equality (Figure 49) one of three engravings gifted to the Committee of Public Education, differs from *Liberty* (Figure 22) in that it is horizontal, rather than vertical in format. *Equality* shows a naked woman, strategically covered by her arm and drapery, with three children next to her. In the background is a triangle with a plumb line, a Masonic symbol, as well as a building tool. Below is a beehive, representing productivity. The woman holds a piece of fruit, which she divides equally amongst the children, representing workers. The child on the far right holds a shovel, indicating his status as a labourer. Like *Liberty*, *Equality* has an accompanying inscription: 'Ils sont égaux dans la société comme devant la Nature'.

Also like *Liberty*, *Equality* directly relates to the French Revolution's motto, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Equality had a greater significance for artists, as well. Before the Revolution, a select jury decided who was good enough to exhibit and win prizes. In theory, Republican arts were supposed to be representative of the people's choice, rather than that of a select few. Equality in the arts was important to Prud'hon, who was selected by his peers to be on a jury that was created by David in 1793. In all these prints Prud'hon is making a statement about the importance of the qualities of the French Revolution and references the Constitution. The third article of the 1793 Constitution declares: 'All men are equal by nature and before the law'.¹²⁶ This is remarkably similar to the inscription on Prud'hon's print. Prud'hon's print can be interpreted as a celebration

¹²⁶ Ibid., The French Constitution of 1793, 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens', Article 3, p. 455.

of the Constitution. It could also be seen as a form of political protest, to remind people of the importance of equality in difficult times. At the height of the Terror, some of the basic rights of the Constitution were being infringed. Robespierre and his actions during the Terror undermined many of the articles of the Constitution, for example: 'the law must protect public and individual liberty against the oppression of those who govern' and 'when the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for the people, and for every portion thereof, the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties'.¹²⁷ Prud'hon is perhaps reminding citizens that by the articles of the Constitution, resistance is justified. However, Prud'hon was a member of the *Commune des Arts*, a club with Jacobin ties. Robespierre was also a Jacobin, and it was reportedly because of these links to Robespierre that Prud'hon was forced to flee Paris at the end of the Terror. Therefore, it seems that Prud'hon would have supported Robespierre's policies. Indeed, at a superficial level, the three prints donated to the Committee of Public Education can be seen as a message of support by Prud'hon. However, I would suggest that Prud'hon was being underhandedly subversive. For while the prints are decidedly pro-Republican, the principles he has chosen to depict were ironically the ones most at stake from the Terror. While Prud'hon had Jacobin leanings, it seems his loyalty did not extend to the point where they infringed on the basic principles of the Republic, which Prud'hon so admired.

¹²⁷ Hall Stewart, *The French Constitution of 1793*, 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens', Article 9, p. 456 and 35, p. 458.

Law (1794)

Law (Figure 50) was also gifted to the Committee of Public Education, and this allegory was reproduced in *The French Constitution* (Figure 51). *Law* shows a woman protecting a small child from her attacker. The woman is the allegory of Justice, a subject Prud'hon revisited.¹²⁸ Justice is dressed in heavily draped robes and armed with a sword as she confronts a naked man armed with a dagger. Unusually, the criminal is naked, which is typically used in classical art to denote a hero. Underneath the plate is the inscription: 'Le faible trouve sa force dans la Loi qui le protège'. While the composition of the work is simple, it is dynamic and charged by the angles of the sword and dagger which form a small triangle, focusing the viewers' attention. Prud'hon creates pathos for the victim, by making her so much smaller than the other figures. This in turn makes Justice seem larger and more imposing – her head is above that of the criminal's. This is a reasonably simple allegory; it is composed of allegorical personifications and follows a logical procession: Crime towards the Victim results in Justice. The law protects all, even the weak.

It is interesting to analyse this work in comparison with the other two: *Liberty* (Figure 22) and *Equality* (Figure 49). The catch-phrase of the Revolution was 'Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité', yet Prud'hon chose not to complete the reference, and depicted law instead of fraternity. Fraternity at this time seemed to have disappeared, even law itself. The Constitution of 1793 states: 'Law is the free and solemn expression of the general will; it is the same for all, whether it protects or punishes; it may order only what is just and

¹²⁸ See p. 126.

useful to society; it may prohibit only what is injurious thereto'.¹²⁹ Furthermore, 'the law must protect public and individual liberty'.¹³⁰ However the law was not protecting those sent to the guillotine, often without trial.

Prud'hon's choice of law could be akin to David's *The Sabine Women*. David used *The Sabine Women* as a message to stop internal fighting amongst the revolutionaries. Similarly, Prud'hon's *Law* could be a message to the public not to forget the importance of law, even in times like the Terror. This idea is further supported by the fact that the work was donated to the Committee of Public Education – Prud'hon intended his works to have a message that would appeal to the people. The choice of donating to the Committee of Public Education is significant as despite the innocuous sounding name, it had the supreme power of arresting and executing during the Terror.¹³¹ With the gifting of these works to the Committee, Prud'hon is making a bold statement about internal corruption, but this seems to have gone largely unnoticed. When this is taken into consideration, the general criticism of Prud'hon that his works lack the heroic and civic moral messages of David is not true. *Law* not only has a strong moral and civic-minded message, it also contains an element of heroism – standing up for the rights granted by the Constitution.

¹²⁹ Hall Stewart, *The French Constitution of 1793*, 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens' Article 4, p. 456.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Article 9.

¹³¹ Horne, p. 44.

The French Constitution (1794)

The French Constitution (Figure 51) brings together all three of the previously mentioned engravings, which are reproduced in this print under the main picture of the French Constitution.¹³² The main figures in *The French Constitution* are all female, and all are united by linked hands and gesture. The central figure, Minerva, is recognizable by her Gorgon breastplate and plumed helmet. Minerva has her arms around two female figures who are holding hands. To the left of Minerva is the allegory of law, who holds a sceptre topped with a rooster, which represents vigilance. To the right of Minerva is Liberty, in a similar incarnation to that in *Liberty* (Figure 22) except now with a Phrygian cap. Around her feet are chains and a broken yoke. On each side of the central figures are three cherubs, as well as a sheep, lion and cat. The cat is the attribute of Liberty, as described by Ripa, 'it will not tolerate any sort of control'.¹³³ The sheep can have a multitude of meanings. Generally the lamb is a Christian symbol representing Jesus, but it can also mean sacrifice.¹³⁴ The sheep may indicate the sacrifices that have been made in order to bring about the Constitution. The cherubs on the right represent different factions of society, made equal by the Constitution. The robed cherub on the far right holding a placard represents the clergy, while the cherub next to him has the remnants of a broken crown at his feet, to represent the fallen aristocracy. Finally, holding the shovel are the people, who hold the hand of Nature, a bare breasted woman. Nature's other hand is clasped by Liberty, creating an allegorical chain: Law, along with Wisdom and Liberty

¹³² The version I refer to here is the final print version of 1798.

¹³³ Ripa, p. 62.

¹³⁴ Hall, p. 185.

allow all orders of society to be made equal by Nature.¹³⁵ This print is particularly significant as it represents an allegory of an actual event – the institution of the French Constitution.¹³⁶ Prud'hon's print, *The French Constitution* was in preparation for what he assumed were the coming changes. Like the previous three prints, *The French Constitution* is a celebration of the ideals contained within the Constitution – the rights of 'equality, liberty, security and property'.¹³⁷ However, Prud'hon must have been disappointed that the principles of the Constitution were being eroded by the Terror.

Unlike the previous prints, Prud'hon continued to work on *The French Constitution* and made changes accordingly. An earlier sketch reveals the historical accuracy of Prud'hon as in the final print version, the aristocracy is represented by a broken crown – for by this time (1794) Louis XVI had been executed. However, in an earlier version found in the Musée des Beaux Arts, Dijon, c. 1792, the cherub has the crown firmly around his arm. According to Laveissière, Prud'hon made other changes when there were legislative changes. The second French Constitution of 1793 allowed universal suffrage to all foreigners. Prud'hon, in a chalk drawing, adapted his composition again, with the figure representing the clergy on the far left given darker skin, and the cherub representing the people given black skin.¹³⁸ The presence of the lion may also be a symbol for ethnic diversity, as the lion traditionally represents Africa.¹³⁹ These changes, however, disappeared in the final print version exhibited in 1798 as universal male suffrage was

¹³⁵ Laveissière, p. 161.

¹³⁶ See Hermeren p. 51.

¹³⁷ Hall Stewart, Constitution of 1793, Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens, Article 2.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 161. Private Collection, c. 1794, black and white chalk on blue paper

¹³⁹ Hall, p. 193.

abolished in 1795. These changes also show Prud'hon was an avid follower of politics, and wanted his works to be as up-to-date as possible. Prud'hon's adaptations also address one of the complaints of allegory made by Abbé Du Bos – that it is essentially not real. While the allegories Prud'hon is depicting are not real, the event itself is, and the changes he continually made reflect his wish to be as true to reality as possible. *The French Constitution* showcases Prud'hon's patriotism and echoes the words of abbé Sieyès: 'the Nation exists before all things and is the origin of all. Its will is always legal, it is the law itself'.¹⁴⁰

Completed shortly after the Revolution, these works reveal an artist not yet disillusioned by the principles of the Republic. Even during the Terror, when these principles of liberty and equality were threatened, Prud'hon still produced art that remained hopeful of change and gifted them to the authorities as a reminder of the promises made. Tellingly, Prud'hon never repeated another series of works like these. Unlike his moral allegories, where he often chose pairs of allegories to complement each other – such as love and friendship, wisdom and truth – Prud'hon chose to represent a single idea in his political abstract allegories. The works in this category use mainstream and popular allegories of the time; because of this, these political allegories are not as innovative or evocative as his moral allegories. Prud'hon himself may have realised this, for he never repeated a similar series. Out of all Prud'hon's works, these are the only ones that strongly depict Prud'hon's political leanings. His exile to the Haute Seine after these works were completed may have meant Prud'hon felt it was too risky to display his political leanings

¹⁴⁰ Abbé Sieyès quoted in Boime, *Revolution*, p. 420.

so clearly, and this may be why he chose not to produce overly political works again.

**Figure 48. Antoine Jean Gros, *Allegorical Figure of the French Republic*, 1795,
73 x 61 cm, oil on canvas, Musée National du Château, Versailles**

**Figure 49. Jacques-Louis Copia after Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Equality*, 1794-98,
6.5 x 12, etching and engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France**

**Figure 50. Jacques-Louis Copia after Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Law*, 1794-98,
11 x 14 cm, etching and engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France**

**Figure 51. Jacques-Louis Copia after Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *The French Constitution*, 1794-98,
40.6 x 50.3, engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France**

Allegorical Portraits

Throughout his lifetime, Prud'hon was indebted to particular individuals who supported him in his artistic career. While it was usual to honour a person with a portrait, Prud'hon's strength was the allegory. It was by using allegorical portraiture that Prud'hon was able to express more than the physical appearance of a person, but aspects of their character and how they wished to be seen by others. While Prud'hon's first allegorical portrait, *The Apotheosis of Baron Joursanvault* (Figure 52), is personal, Prud'hon tended to use his allegorical portraits for political purposes. It must be noted that Prud'hon did not make any allegorical portraits during the Republic, but rather under Napoleon.¹⁴¹ I would suggest this is a result of the values of the Republic: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, where the emphasis was not on the individual, but on the collective French people. Allegorical portraits were not unfamiliar to Prud'hon's audience – many of the aristocracy had allegorical portraits painted by leading artists such as Boucher and Nattier. Despite Prud'hon's works commemorating certain individuals, he avoided conveying his personal political beliefs as he did during the Revolution. While Prud'hon was happy to paint for the Napoleonic government, he was careful to keep his own personal leanings under wrap. This is perhaps because of his learned experience of being too closely associated with certain politics and individuals during the Republic, where he was forced to flee Paris owing to his associations with Robespierre and the *Commune des Arts*. Despite the grandeur of the works Prud'hon produced for Napoleon, they reveal no personal feelings of Prud'hon. Indeed, all of the allegorical imagery appears to have been

¹⁴¹ There is also Prud'hon's pre-revolutionary work for Burgundy (see 170).

carefully thought out, providing a link between the classical imagery of the ancients, and the new ruler of the French Empire.

The Apotheosis of Baron Joursanvault (1780)

Prud'hon's earliest patron, Baron Joursanvault was the recipient of Prud'hon's first allegory to glorify a specific individual. *The Apotheosis of Baron Joursanvault* (Figure 52) shows a bust of the Baron surrounded by the allegorical figures: Mercury, Minerva, Venus, Apollo, Prudence, Cupid and the Spirit of Painting. Each allegorical figure plays an important part in the painting, in indicating why Joursanvault is worthy of receiving such an honour. Mercury, the messenger of the gods, hovers over the bust.¹⁴² He is traditionally represented with his caduceus, but has a winged helmet rather than winged sandals.¹⁴³ Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, crowns the bust with a laurel wreath, an honour only bestowed on victors. She is recognizable by her plumed helmet and breastplate. The bust is also decorated with flowers by Venus, on the right, accompanied by her son, Cupid. Venus carries a mirror, while Cupid offers a heart with an arrow through it. According to Lavessière, Venus bears a resemblance to the Baron's future wife, so here the allegory becomes more personal, with the arrow referring to the Baron's romance.¹⁴⁴ To the left of the statue is Prudence, who is bare-breasted. Next to her is Apollo, God of the sun and music, holding his attributes of the lyre and laurel wreath.

¹⁴² Mercury, also known as Hermes, has many roles, such as God of thieves, but the role he is most likely playing here is Hermes Psychopompos, who conveys the souls of the dead to the underworld.

¹⁴³ This is most likely for practical reasons: Mercury is easier to recognize by placing his attributes around the upper body, rather than the lower.

¹⁴⁴ Laveissière, p. 40.

The Spirit of Painting sits in the foreground, and this represents Prud'hon as the artist who through his work has placed the Baron in the Temple of Memory, to be remembered by posterity.¹⁴⁵ Laveissière states the scene of camaraderie painted by the Spirit of Painting is an allusion to the Masonic Lodge that both Prud'hon and Baron Joursanvault belonged to.¹⁴⁶ The tradition of apotheosis originates from the ancient world, and is the ritual of the dead turning into gods. However, Prud'hon's composition is premature, as Baron Joursanvault was very much alive at the time this was rendered. The bust shows Baron Joursanvault in military uniform, which refers to his service in the army as a light horseman.¹⁴⁷ Prud'hon is also referencing the classical tradition of apotheosis, as well as Roman funeral rituals. The bust of Joursanvault is similar to 'death masks' or *imagines* which Romans would keep in their homes to be carried in funeral processions, as well as to record prestigious individuals of the family.

This is an allegorical portrait with a difference; for while Baron Joursanvault is not represented as an allegory, the presence of the allegorical figures clearly represents aspects of the Baron's personality: wisdom (Minerva), good sense (Prudence), love (Venus), creativity (Apollo), and his role as a benefactor to the arts (Spirit of Painting). The title of the work itself is flattering, as apotheosis scenes are usually reserved for the greatest of individuals.¹⁴⁸ This allegory fits into Hermeren's definition of an allegorical

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴⁶ Laveissière, 'Le Premier Tableau', p. 18.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 17. However Clément mentions the possibility of it being a bust of Lafayette. Clément, p. 396.

¹⁴⁸ In ancient art apotheosis scenes usually depict emperors e.g. *The Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina* (Vatican), but the nineteenth century saw contemporaneous figures being made into gods: Rude's *Napoleon Awakening Into Immortality*, and Girodet's, *The Apotheosis of the French Heroes who Died For Their Country During the War for Liberty*. (Also known as *The Shades Welcomed by Ossian*) and even artists: Charles Meynier's *Apotheosis of Poussin*, *De Le Sueur and Le Brun*, early nineteenth century,

portrait, and although while not stylistically Rococo, allegorical portraits were very fashionable at the royal court. In essence, Prud'hon's work has the same purpose as Nattier's *The Duchess of Chaulnes, Represented as Hebe* – to flatter the sitter.¹⁴⁹ Prud'hon's work was praised by the Baron, but Prud'hon responded with a letter to the Baron outlining the picture's flaws:

1. Le temple n'est point bien disposé [...] 2. Le Mercure, très mal dessiné, est dans une pose forcée et n'a aucune expression [...] 3. Toutes les figures sont disproportionnées et infiniment trop grandes, quelques-unes des têtes fort médiocres, toutes les mains en sont mauvaises.¹⁵⁰

Clément wrote of the work as 'assez médiocre, et il n'a guère d'importance que par sa date'.¹⁵¹ At this stage, Prud'hon had yet to find a style that suited him, and he had yet to go to Rome. However, for someone raised in a rural township, and not exposed to the great arts found in Paris or Rome, this is a particularly good effort to represent complex ideas. In essence, he knew nothing other than what he had been taught.¹⁵²

The Glorification of Burgundy (1786)

The Glorification of Burgundy (Figure 53) was Prud'hon's payment to the state of Burgundy for awarding him the *Prix de Rome*.¹⁵³ Prud'hon arrived in Rome in 1785, with instructions from the state to copy Pietro Da Cortona's ceiling of the Palazzo Barberini, *The Triumph of Religion* (Figure 54), but to make alterations so that instead of glorifying

Louvre, oil on canvas and Cezanne's *Apotheosis of Delacroix*, late nineteenth century, Musée Granée, oil on canvas.

¹⁴⁹ Nattier, *The Duchess of Chaulnes, Represented as Hebe*, 1744, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹⁵⁰ Clément, p. 394.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 396.

¹⁵² Clément states 'Prud'hon ne connaissait d'autre manière que celle de son maître Devosge', p. 397.

¹⁵³ While not a portrait, per se, it functions as a representation of the Condé ruling family as a whole.

Pope Urban VIII, it would glorify Burgundy. Prud'hon was deeply unhappy at not being able to choose his own subject and disliked Da Cortona's work, calling him 'a rather bad painter of times past'.¹⁵⁴ Prud'hon's preference was either a copy of Leonardo's *The Last Supper* or Raphael's *Massacre of the Innocents* – but these subjects were not 'agreeable and gay' enough for the intended purpose.¹⁵⁵ Prud'hon's work was plagued from the start, as he could not gain entry to the state officials' first choice, Guido Reni's *Aurora*.¹⁵⁶ The choice was then changed to da Cortona's work. Prud'hon planned to 'endeavour as much as possible to correct the defects of the original' and converted the Baroque ceiling into a Neoclassical one.¹⁵⁷ It is evident why Prud'hon disliked his task so much. While the allegory for *The Glorification of Burgundy* was complex, unlike Prud'hon's later allegorical compositions, it was only achieved by the overwhelming use of allegorical figures. Prud'hon wrote to Devosge that 'it astonishes only because of the immensity of the field which Pietro da Cortona has filled'.¹⁵⁸ Overfilling canvases was not Prud'hon's way. His later allegories managed to achieve complexity by using several allegorical figures, and establishing a relationship between them. However, the original by da Cortona featured even more figures, which Prud'hon found superfluous. The central figure, which in the original was Divine Providence, was altered to represent Burgundy, with the arms of the Condé sitting next to her.¹⁵⁹ Overall, there are approximately twenty five figures in Prud'hon's final version. The allegorical representation of Burgundy sits

¹⁵⁴ Prud'hon quoted in Held, p. 288.

¹⁵⁵ Clément, p. 21.

¹⁵⁶ Guidi Reno, *Aurora*, 1613-14, Casino Rospigliosi, ceiling fresco.

Ibid., p. 22 Other calamities included two earthquakes (January 1786), p. 26, the growing demands of his wife from Cluny – who was asking Devosge for financial aid (June 1786), p. 34, and nearing the end of Prud'hon's project he became ill with a fever (October 1786), p. 36.

¹⁵⁷ Held, p. 290.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Held, pp. 292-293.

on a cloud. Below her, on the left is a man eating small *putti* and holding a scythe – an allegory of Time.¹⁶⁰ Below right are the Fates, showing the thread of human life that is cut short by Atropos. At Burgundy's left sits Painting as the representation of silent poetry – she carries a palette and her mouth is bound. Next to Painting sits Sculpture, holding a bust that is purportedly of Prud'hon.¹⁶¹ Above Burgundy are five female figures, floating in mid-air holding a wreath. At the top, holding a trumpet, are a marshal's staff and flag, representing Fame, and to her right is Minerva, holding a smaller wreath to symbolise victory.¹⁶² The remainder of the figures are largely generic, as they have no attributes with which to distinguish them. Prud'hon's work was admired by Ingres, but 'il a été considéré par autres comme une peinture froide et sans caractère, de second ordre à tout prendre, dans l'œuvre personnelle de Prud'hon'.¹⁶³ *The Glorification of Burgundy* is not Prud'hon's finest work, partially as a result of Prud'hon's relative inexperience, his lack of enthusiasm for his subject and the fact that da Cortona's style was quite different to that of Prud'hon's.¹⁶⁴

In terms of iconological significance, *The Glorification of Burgundy* reflects the old-fashioned and opulent tastes that remained within the central powers in France. A work by Domenico Mondo, completed around the same time as Prud'hon's, shows the prescribed taste. *The Burgundy Arms, Supported by Virtues, Triumph over Vices* (Figure

¹⁶⁰ Time is usually represented by Cronus, the original father of the gods, whose realm was time. When a prophecy revealed he would be usurped by one of his own children, he ate them.

¹⁶¹ Laveissière, p. 59.

¹⁶² Once again Minerva is recognizable by her breastplate (this time with the distinct Gorgon's head on the aegis) and her plumed helmet.

¹⁶³ Anon, *Mémoires de la Société Bourguignonne de Géographie et D'Histoire*, Paris, Eugène Jacquot, 1910, p. 512.

¹⁶⁴ Prud'hon was known for not completing works.

55) promotes the same government, and is in the same style.¹⁶⁵ Both are ceiling designs and both use allegorical figures to express the virtues of the Burgundians. Both have the Burgundy arms as the centre-piece, surrounded by the associated virtues. Fame, with her trumpet is present in both works, however, Mondo's is more dramatic with the battle of virtue and vice, rather than the static virtues Prud'hon depicts. On the centenary of Prud'hon's death, *The Glorification of Burgundy* (Figure 53) was still not well received, with one critic saying 'Je ne parle pas non plus de son grand tableau, imité de Piere de Cortone... [il ne] l'amusa guère'.¹⁶⁶ Thus, Prud'hon was justified in his dislike of following another's style, as it produced a work that was not up to his standards.

The Triumph of Bonaparte (1801)

Prud'hon's *Triumph of Bonaparte* (Figure 56) debuted at the 1801 Salon to great acclaim. Despite this, it remained only as a drawing, never as a painting or the intended engraving. The drawing, now in the Musée Condé, is a celebration of the Treaty of Lunéville, the armistice between Britain and France. *The Triumph of Bonaparte* is also, along with *The Apotheosis of Baron Joursanvault* (Figure 52), one of the few compositions where Prud'hon has incorporated real life figures into an allegory. The drawing shows a triumphal procession with *putti* leading the way, followed by the traditional *quadriga* (a chariot drawn by four horses) that contains Napoleon and two female figures, with a procession of figures bringing up the rear. At its exhibition, the following explanation

¹⁶⁵ Name stated by La Joconde database. Also known at the Louvre as *The Triumph of the Burgundian Family of Naples*, Louvre, before 1787. This is a study for an intended ceiling at the Caserté Palace in Naples.

¹⁶⁶ Maurice Brillant, 'Les Œuvres et les Hommes', *Le Correspondant*, Paris, V. A. Waille, 1922, p. 744.

was given for the work: 'Peace, allegory. Bonaparte, between Victory and Peace, is followed by the Muses and the Sciences; his chariot is preceded by Games and Mirth'.¹⁶⁷

Prud'hon is borrowing heavily from classical tradition; not only stylistically, but also to the extent that the purpose of his work is the same as centuries before: to glorify an individual. Triumphal processions occurred in Rome after a major victory. The spoils of war would be paraded, followed by the conquering hero and armies. Later a triumphal arch would be erected to commemorate the victory. During his stay in Rome, Prud'hon would have seen the famous triumphal arches, such as the Arch of Titus and the Arch of Constantine. Prud'hon's triumphal scene is borrowed from the Arch of Titus (Figure 57), which shows the Emperor Titus in a *quadriga* with the personification of Roma beside him, and Victory flying behind him. Prud'hon replaced Roma with peace and placed Victory beside Napoleon.¹⁶⁸ The iconography of this is important – the implication is that victory has brought peace, and both were accomplished by Napoleon. *The Triumph of Bonaparte* (Figure 56) is one of Prud'hon's busiest compositions – he had obviously considered the importance of this work and decided his usual one or two simple allegories were not in keeping with the triumphal tradition. Iconologically, this drawing can represent a real event. On Napoleon's conquest of Italy, he held his own triumphal march, with the artistic treasures of Italy as his spoils.¹⁶⁹ Diderot, in his *Notes on Painting*, described how to represent each governmental state in art. He wrote that a Republic 'is a state based on equality. Each subject thinks of himself as a little monarch.

¹⁶⁷ Laveissière, p. 171.

¹⁶⁸ Note Prud'hon focuses on the positive aspects of Napoleon's reign: peace and increased awareness in the arts and sciences, represented by the muses.

¹⁶⁹ In 1810, Napoleon began construction on his own triumphal arch, the Arc de Triomphe.

The bearing of a Republican should be erect, resolute and proud'.¹⁷⁰ Prud'hon's depiction of Napoleon embodies Diderot's instructions, as well as showing Napoleon in profile; his noble Romanised features are evident. Prud'hon's work flatters Napoleon, but does not aggrandize him to the point of ridiculousness as Canova did in *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker*.¹⁷¹

Prud'hon's work is also outstanding when compared with other Napoleonic allegories, because it still emphasises the importance of the common people. Allegories, such as Franque's *Allegory of the Condition of France Before the Return from Egypt* (Figure 11) and Alexandre Veron-Bellecourt's *Allegory to the Glory of Napoleon*, are solely focused on promoting Napoleon alone.¹⁷² Prud'hon's work is dependent on the people of France, the unseen crowd who are watching the parade. Without the crowd, there is no triumphal parade; just as without the people of France there is no Napoleon. Although it is unlikely Prud'hon's work had any great influence on or even came to the attention of Napoleon, the power of portrait allegory cannot be understated.¹⁷³ Girodet's *The New Danäe*, a scathing satire of Mme Lange, a patron who had wronged him, virtually ruined her career, and almost Girodet's as well.¹⁷⁴ While a minor work of Prud'hon's, Brookner

¹⁷⁰ Diderot, *Notes on Painting*, p. 213.

¹⁷¹ Antonio Canova, *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker*, 1806, Apsley Hall, London, marble, 279.4 cm.

¹⁷² Franque, *Allegory of the Condition of France Before the Return from Egypt*, 1810, Louvre, oil on canvas. Alexandre Veron-Bellecourt, *Allegory to the Glory of Napoleon*, before 1806, Louvre, oil on canvas.

¹⁷³ Prud'hon's allegory probably did come to the attention of other artists. The following year, Callet exhibited *The Entry of Bonaparte in Lyon in 1802*. 1804, Musée Historique, Lyon, drawing. The original painting was burnt in 1816. Callet virtually uses the same idea as Prud'hon by depicting Bonaparte entering Lyon in a triumphal procession. Victory hovers over Napoleon's head, and Justice sits beside him while several winged figures fly ahead to herald Napoleon's entry. Callet's work also echoes the extremely linear style found in Prud'hon's.

¹⁷⁴ Girodet, *The New Danäe*, 1799, The Minneapolis Institute of the Arts, oil on canvas.

credits *The Triumph of Bonaparte* (Figure 56) as being a crucial influence on Ingres' *Apotheosis of Napoleon I*.¹⁷⁵ While *The Triumph of Bonaparte* was not officially commissioned by the Bonapartes, it would lead to court commissions.

The King of Rome (1811)

To celebrate the occasion of the birth of Napoleon's heir, Napoleon François Joseph Charles Bonaparte (1811-1832), the King of Rome, later the Duke of Reichstadt and Napoleon II, Prud'hon completed two projects. One was a cradle for the infant, and the other a painting, *The King of Rome* (Figure 60). The intent of both these projects was not only to celebrate the arrival of an heir, but also to create allusions to previous dynasties to legitimise Napoleon's power. *The King of Rome* shows a swathed infant lying on the ground amongst bushes. Voiart, one of Prud'hon's earliest biographers is most eloquent in his description:

He painted the royal child sleeping under palm and laurel trees; he is illuminated by the radiance of Glory; two imperial flowers joined above his head seem to be protecting his sleep.¹⁷⁶

While there are no allegorical figures in this portrait, the immediate allusion is to Romulus, the original 'King of Rome'. The legend of Romulus is that he and his brother, Remus, were abandoned in the wilderness where they were suckled by a she-wolf. Once they grew up, they fought each other to the death for the right to Rome, with Romulus being the victor. The King of Rome's privileged heritage is indicated in the painting by

¹⁷⁵ Brookner, 'Prud'hon: Master Decorator of the Empire', p. 192. Ingres, *The Apotheosis of Napoleon I*, c. 1853, Louvre (Département des Arts Graphiques), crayon and watercolour.

¹⁷⁶ Laveissière, p. 208.

the luxurious red blanket in royal colours, embroidered with gold thread, and a rich blue cloth hanging behind the head of the sleeping infant.

In terms of influence, Prud'hon may have used his namesake, Peter Paul Rubens' *Romulus and Remus* (Figure 59) as an inspiration for *The King of Rome* (Figure 58).¹⁷⁷

Rubens' painting shows the babies Romulus and Remus lying next to a she-wolf, in a natural setting that is very similar to that of Prud'hon's, particularly in the flax-like plants used to frame the children. Prud'hon was one of many artists chosen to paint the new heir. Isabey, Gérard and Hennequin completed their own versions of *The King of Rome*. Isabey, was First painter to the Bonaparte family and later replaced Prud'hon as Marie-Louise's drawing instructor.¹⁷⁸ Isabey also painted *The King of Rome in Mars' Helmet* (Figure 60).¹⁷⁹ Like Prud'hon, Isabey attempts to bring allegorical significance into his work, with references to Rome (and Napoleon) in the eagle standard and the laurel leaves that surround the baby and also frame the work. The baby's head is dwarfed by a helmet, a symbol of the god of war, Mars, and a reference to Napoleon's military prowess.¹⁸⁰ However, Isabey's piece lacks the subtlety of Prud'hon's. Despite Isabey's classical references, the baby is fussily dressed in contemporary clothing and the overall effect is a contrived setting, rather than the wholly natural setting of Prud'hon. Prud'hon made a conscious decision not to depict Napoleon in his work. The reference to Napoleon comes only from the flowers. First fritillarias symbolise the infant's heritage from both France

¹⁷⁷ Rubens, *Romulus and Remus*, c. 1614, Capitoline Museum, Rome, Oil on canvas.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Baillio, 'Jean Baptiste Isabey (1767-1855), Chroniqueur de la Naissance du Roi de Rome', *L'œil*, no. 472, June 1995, p. 38.

¹⁷⁹ Isabey, *The King of Rome in Mars' Helmet*, 1811, Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison et de Bois-Préau, watercolour.

¹⁸⁰ However it is interesting to note that the King of Rome was born in March (*Mars* in French), so there could be a double reference here, not only to Mars the god, but Mars the month as well.

and Austria, the myrtle, the symbol of Venus, represents Marie-Louise, while the laurel, his father.¹⁸¹

Prud'hon's work is not only an allegorical portrait, but also an allegory of an event: the much celebrated birth of a long awaited heir. The amount of art produced to commemorate this birth shows just how significant this event was to the future of France. The winning work of the *Prix de Rome* in 1811 was an allegory of the King of Rome's birth, *Lycurgus Presenting the Heir to the Throne* by Alexandre-Denis Abel de Pujol.¹⁸² This reflected a response by the artists to the direct pressure by Napoleon himself for them to produce art worthy of this event.¹⁸³ The abundance of art to commemorate a new heir is not unique to Napoleon, but a monarchical tradition. Isabey's *Napoleon Showing the King of Rome to Empress Marie Louise* maintains a tradition that has long been associated with the monarchy and aristocracy, seen in Francois Joseph Belanger's *Interior of the Chamber of the Countess d'Artois, at Versailles, the Day of the Birth of the Duke d'Angoulême*.¹⁸⁴ Iconographically, Isabey's work shows that by this point in time, there really was little difference between an empire and a monarchy – the iconography used is the same. In fact, Eleanor deLorme asserts that the Napoleonic court style was, in essence, based on that from the time of Marie-Antoinette, but 'simpler, bolder, more

¹⁸¹ Laveissière, p. 208.

¹⁸² Alexandre-Denis Abel de Pujol, *Lycurgus Presenting the Heir to the Throne*, 1811, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, oil on canvas.

¹⁸³ Boime, 'Art in the Age of Bonapartism', p. 19. Abel de Pujol also made a copy of *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* at Laval's Palace of Justice, c. nineteenth century.

¹⁸⁴ Belanger, *Interior of the Chamber of the Countess d'Artois, at Versailles, the Day of the Birth of the Duke d'Angoulême*, 1776, Private collection, watercolour. Also note Antoine Dieu after Watteau, *Birth of Louis of France, the Duke of Burgundy*, 6th August 1682, 1715, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, oil on canvas.

dramatic, ponderous, formal and assertive'.¹⁸⁵ In Prud'hon's *The King of Rome* (Figure 58), the simplicity of the new court style is evident and it is quite assertive in its declaration of France's leadership. By 1814, portraits of the King of Rome had taken on greater significance in their use as political propaganda.¹⁸⁶ France was on the point of being invaded and Napoleon published a portrait of his son with the caption 'Je prie Dieu pour mon père et la France'.¹⁸⁷ Prud'hon's work gained further life when it was engraved by Achille Lefèvre in 1825.¹⁸⁸

Cradle for the King of Rome

Prud'hon, along with goldsmith Odiot and engraver Thomire was commissioned by Frochot to create a toilette for the new empress. They later collaborated again for a cradle commissioned by the city of Paris for the new heir to the empire. The cradle represents the meeting of all arts: craftsmen, painters, goldsmiths and jewellers and can be seen as an extension of Prud'hon's painting, *The King of Rome*, where the similar classical imagery is carried over.¹⁸⁹ This extremely luxurious and elaborate cradle, featuring silver, gold, velvet, silk and tulle, cost 153,289 francs to make.¹⁹⁰ Guffey states that the cradle is 'a monument to Napoleon's own ambitions, and this is made clear through the

¹⁸⁵ Eleanor P. DeLorme, *Josephine and the Arts of the Empire*, Los Angeles, Getty Publications, 2005, p. 4. Ironically, Marie-Louise was the great niece of Marie Antoinette.

¹⁸⁶ Jean de Bourgoing, 'Essai sur l'Iconographie du Roi de Rome, Duc de Reichstadt', *La Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne*, 62, December, 1932, p. 180.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Clément-Janin, 'Prud'hon: Ses Gravures et ses Graveurs', *La Renaissance de l'Art Français et des Industries de Luxe*, 5, May 1922, p. 331.

¹⁸⁹ While technically not a portrait, the cradle is a piece of decorative art that functions as an allegorical portrait of the union between Napoleon and Marie-Louise, and the union between France and Rome.

¹⁹⁰ Laveissière, p. 206.

iconography.¹⁹¹ Sitting directly above the cradle, for the baby to see, is an eagle – Napoleon's symbol. The eagle is about to take flight towards a wreath of stars at the peak of the cradle, which has Napoleon's emblem on it. The wreath is held aloft by the winged female figure of Victory, who appears to be flying, with her wind-blown drapery, and her only support is a small globe at the top of the cradle's hood. This ball, representing the earth, is also seen in Napoleon's hand in Canova's sculpture *Napoleon as Mars the Peace-Maker*, and can also be seen as a reference to Prud'hon's *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth*. On the back of the cradle's hood is the inscription that gives an explanation of the iconography:

Glory hovers above the World, holding the Crown of Victory and the Crown of Immortality, in the centre of which shines the Sun of Napoleon. An Eaglet at the foot of the cradle gazes upon the heroic Sun, spreading its wings as if wanting to fly up to it.¹⁹²

Two vignettes decorate each side of the cradle. The first is an allegorical representation of the Tiber, at his feet the twins Romulus and Remus, being suckled by a wolf (Figure 62). This is an example of the allegorical method that uses a person to represent a geographical feature. Prud'hon's allegorical Tiber bears a striking resemblance to the representation of the Danube on Trajan's column. On the other side of the cradle is Mercury with his winged helmet and shoes, bringing a baby to a crowned woman (Figure 63). The woman is an allegorical representation of the Seine, but one can read this more literally and interpret it as Marie-Louise and her newborn son, delivered by the gods. The meaning of these vignettes is quite clear: the newborn heir unites the two empires that of France and Rome; as well as uniting the traditions of the past with those of the future.

¹⁹¹ Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 160.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Prud'hon did not typically use geographical allegories, but the emphasis of this work is on tradition, hence the somewhat old fashioned representation. Each frieze is bordered above and below with bees, another symbol of Napoleon, and the cradle legs are decorated by *genii* representing Justice and Power. Power holds a club, similar to that of Hercules, while Justice holds the scales. Power, or Strength, is an allegorical figure that Prud'hon had never used before, and would never use again.¹⁹³ Justice, however, is now a young man, rather than a woman as represented in *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13).¹⁹⁴ In both these works, Prud'hon is altering his emphasis for the patron, making the cradle altogether more masculine and incorporating Napoleonic virtues as would be expected for the heir to the Empire.

The cradle, as a whole, is replete with symbolism, and involved the combined efforts of numerous artisans. First of all, there are the Napoleonic symbols: the bees, the eagle and the emblem mixed with the symbols of Rome (the Tiber) and France (the Seine). Then there are the virtues: victory, power, justice and abundance. This cradle brings together all three types of the symbols in order to highlight Napoleonic qualities, which, by being depicted on this cradle, imply that they will be passed on to his son. This is reinforced by the eagle at the foot of the crib (not an eaglet as the inscription states) poised to fly towards the Napoleonic emblem, clearly showing the line of succession. Prud'hon's decorative projects were vast and ambitious, but ultimately ignored in favour of his

¹⁹³ Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line*, p. 161.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

paintings. But Prud'hon is perhaps better suited to being remembered as 'master decorator of the empire' rather than as a minor painter.¹⁹⁵

The allegorical portraits by Prud'hon show that he was just as capable as David at mixing in the political world. Prud'hon was relatively shrewd in his political opinions, and this allowed him to work under different governments. Prud'hon's allegorical portraits are of modern people, but they are imbued with classical references and ideals. Prud'hon's mastery was in the subtlety of these messages. For instance, in *The King of Rome* (Figure 58), the reference to Napoleon is made through flowers. Part of Prud'hon's appeal was the lack of war-like imagery. While artists such as Gros honoured Napoleon through depicting bloody war scenes, Prud'hon never chose to represent Napoleon in his best role, military commander. *The Triumph of Bonaparte* (Figure 56) shows the aftermath of war, rather than the war itself. By focusing on the allegorical aspects of Napoleon's character, instead of military campaigns, Prud'hon was able to avoid alienating viewers sick of bloody imagery. Indeed, even by 1801, the leading critic, Chaussard, castigated the number of battle paintings, saying:

To offer, as some artists have done, men, or rather tigers, who skin the wounded, disgusting piles of naked and palpitating bodies, odd, cold atrocities, is to lack judgement and philosophy; it is to remove from art all its moral dignity.... It may be that images of barbarity are frequent and those of humanity are rare, but it is by placing the former in the shadows and putting the latter in the light that an author shows his spirit and especially his heart.¹⁹⁶

By representing the positive aspects of Napoleon's reign, Prud'hon is not only distinguishing himself from artists such as Gros, but also making his works seem more

¹⁹⁵ This in particular is Brookner's assertions in her article, 'Prud'hon: Master Decorator of the Empire'.

¹⁹⁶ Chaussard in O'Brien, p. 97.

thoughtful and himself more knowledgeable by using allegory as his language of communication.¹⁹⁷

Addressing Allegorical Criticism

Earlier in Chapter Two, I addressed the problems with allegory that were arising in the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁸ The main criticisms of allegory were that it was untruthful, elitist, lacked immediate understanding and lacked innovation. Prud'hon in some way, through each of his works, was able to address these problems. First, the allegation that allegory is untruthful stands. While allegories do not exist in real life, the way Prud'hon used his allegories to represent the current climate is truthful. For instance, *The Triumph of Bonaparte* (Figure 56) and *The King of Rome* (Figure 58) both reveal aspects of France's political situation through allegory. *The Triumph of Bonaparte* celebrates a real event, the armistice between France and Britain, while *The King of Rome* celebrates the birth of the heir to the Empire.¹⁹⁹ It is also important to note Prud'hon's position in comparison with other allegorists. Hennequin's *Philosophy Drawing aside the Clouds that Hid the Truth; the Triumph of the French People, or the 10th of August, a relative Allegory to this famous Day* (Figure 9) is particularly untruthful because it completely masks the reality of that day. Prud'hon made conscious choices not to pick a violent or bloody scene – it did not fit with his aesthetic. Prud'hon also never chose to make an allegory fully real –

¹⁹⁷ Such as the birth of the heir, and giving *The Triumph of Bonaparte* the secondary name of *Peace* and depicting Sciences and the Muses to show Napoleon's contributions to those areas.

¹⁹⁸ See p. 57.

¹⁹⁹ These types of allegories are what Du Bos described as 'mixed' allegory, featuring allegorical figures with historical personalities.

that is the people were real, but the situation was imagined. This can be seen in *The Triumph of Bonaparte* and *The King of Rome* – they depict real people but they are placed in imagined situations. It is also debatable whether truth is really relevant to a mode of expression like allegory. Painting itself is an illusion, creating a three dimensional image out of two dimensional material – the method itself is untruthful. Painting, as described by Houssaye can provide access to an unseen world. By using allegory, Prud'hon was able to show people his artistic vision of aspects of human nature otherwise not visible to the human eye.

Another eighteenth century criticism of allegory was that it lacked immediacy in communicating a story, or that it could not be understood at all by those of a certain class. Prud'hon always simplified his allegories so that the allegorical message would be revealed. He did this by having few characters, and by using a simple composition. Apart from the unusual pairing in *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20), Prud'hon used easily recognizable figures, such as Love, Liberty and Justice. Prud'hon would also often pair one allegorical concept with another so that it was more recognizable. This can be seen in *Justice and Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13), *Wisdom and Truth Descending to Earth* (Figure 21) and *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20). Prud'hon was also able to communicate the basic concept of his allegories by the descriptive titles, making his works more understandable to all audiences. The greatest exception to Prud'hon's moral allegories is the decorations he made for the Salon de la Richesse. Unlike the above mentioned paintings, the Salon de la Richesse scheme is allegorically complex. However, unlike his canvases, the Salon was created for an

educated audience that would have been knowledgeable in the nuances of allegory. This shows Prud'hon had an understanding of his audience, and catered to it. One can imagine he would be sympathetic to the ordinary, less well educated viewer concerning allegory, as Prud'hon himself came from a humble background.

Lastly, when addressing the issue of innovation, allegory can still be found wanting. However, the whole point of allegory is for recognition based on a previous visual experience. In order for allegory to function, the viewer needs to recognize the attributes of allegorical figures and know what they stand for. This does not mean that an artist cannot work around the allegorical genre to make it their own. Prud'hon's works, while reliant on making connections between the art of the past, still had elements of originality in the way he approached the allegory. Prud'hon's simplified composition with minimal figures is unique in comparison with the grand allegories that preceded him, such as those of Boucher, and even Rubens. Even within his own time, Prud'hon's allegories stood out from those of his contemporaries working in the same field. Hennequin and Regnault were still working in a relatively old fashioned, over-blown allegorical style, where the overall message of the work could be lost in immense detail. Prud'hon's supreme allegory, *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13) is also innovative because it avoids making a 'cold' allegory. Instead of merely depicting the allegorical figures, Prud'hon adds drama and tension through the landscape and the lighting effects. It was this ability to show allegorical figures in new and interesting ways that added an original edge to Prud'hon's works.

Prud'hon and Allegory: a Conclusion

Prud'hon's allegories stand out not just for the mastery and grace of their execution, but the variety of subject matter. Although Prud'hon rarely deviated from his allegorical path, the varied nature of his allegories allowed his work to stay interesting and relevant. In his lifetime, Prud'hon produced allegories on a large number of topics, including liberty, love, justice, families and certain individuals. This variety, within the genre of allegory, and the variety within different media, including the decorative arts, the print and painting, combined with the regime changes of the French government, make Prud'hon a multi-talented individual with an unlimited capacity to adapt. His ability to maintain relevancy under different governments is all the more remarkable because he never stopped using allegory. Prud'hon explained his ideas through allegory, and this never changed, although the subject matter did. It is difficult to say exactly why Prud'hon chose to work with allegory. Despite the existence of personal correspondence, Prud'hon never explained why allegory so fascinated him. I would suggest that Prud'hon's choice of allegory had to do with his love of Renaissance artists, such as Leonardo and Raphael. Prud'hon not only admired the art of Renaissance artists, but also their versatility across a wide range of media. His experimenting between different genres, such as drawing, printmaking and painting is similar to the ethos of the 'Renaissance man' – who is well educated in many different fields. Allegory was a way Renaissance artists could communicate their learning of classical principles and humanist theories. Prud'hon was a man perhaps best suited to another time, and allegory was a way of not only communicating his affinity with great artists of the past, but also expressing the relationship between the past and the present. By using allegory, an ancient method of

communication, to express events relating to his own time period, Prud'hon is keeping the link between the past and the present alive. This is particularly important considering the French Revolution looked to the classical past for inspiration.

In some ways, Prud'hon's intense preoccupation with allegory may have been his curse. The declining popularity for allegory in art meant fewer people were interested in Prud'hon's works, and, as a result, he has been the subject of less scholarly attention than some of his contemporaries. Prud'hon is not the only one to have suffered from his choice of allegory. Regnault and Hennequin, two allegorists working at the same time as Prud'hon, have suffered the same fate. In 1800, the Institut ranked Regnault third and Hennequin eighth in the top ten painters in France.²⁰⁰ However, like Prud'hon, these painters have been largely forgotten.²⁰¹ It was Prud'hon's choice to work in a genre that was out of fashion that makes him so fascinating. By choosing to work in an unpopular genre, Prud'hon was able to dominate in allegorical paintings, making allegory his realm and the empire over which he ruled, rather than being a small fish in a big pond if he had chosen history painting as his main genre.

Prud'hon and the Twenty-First Century

At the beginning of this thesis, I discussed that modern audiences, without the background and understanding of allegory that was present in the eighteenth century,

²⁰⁰ Laveissière, p. 22.

²⁰¹ Benoit's 1994 publication, *Philippe-Auguste Hennequin* solely addresses Hennequin as an artist; otherwise he is usually mentioned as an afterthought in books of revolutionary painting.

would never truly understand Prud'hon's work. Certainly the fact that Prud'hon has largely been forgotten today shows that his use of allegory has alienated modern audiences, who can better relate to the works of his contemporaries, such as David. What has become clear by looking at criticism from Prud'hon's time and today is that eighteenth and nineteenth century critics felt no need to explain or analyse the allegory. For instance, early biographers such as Clément mainly discuss Prud'hon's handling of figures rather than the allegory itself. In contrast, modern scholarship is almost exclusively about the interpretation of the allegories, from Brookner's theory regarding that *The Union of Love and Friendship* (Figure 20) represents Sculpture and Painting, to the theory proposed by Boime that *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (Figure 13) is an allegory of the *Code Napoleon*. This suggests that current audiences have indeed lost the innate ability to understand Prud'hon's works. However, this does not mean that they cannot be appreciated by a modern viewer, nor does it mean that the ability to understand Prud'hon's works is lost completely to us. Further knowledge and experience of allegory may allow a fuller understanding for a wider audience.

Figure 52. Pierre Paul Prud'hon *The Apotheosis of Baron Joursanvault*, 1780,

32. x 25.2 cm, brown ink, brown wash and white gouache, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon

Figure 53. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *The Glorification of Burgundy*, 1786,

138.5 x 86 cm, oil on canvas, private collection

Figure 54. Pietro Da Cortona, *The Triumph of Religion* (also known as *The Triumph of Divine*

***Providence*), 1633-9, fresco, Grand Salon of the Palazzo Barberini, Rome**

Figure 55. Domenico Mondo, *The Burgundy Arms, Supported by Virtues, Triumph over Vices*, c. 1787,

129 x 63 cm, oil on fabric, Musée du Louvre

Figure 56. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *The Triumph of Bonaparte* (also known as *Peace*), 1801,

9.3 x 15.5 cm, brown ink, brown wash, Musée du Louvre

Figure 57. Detail from the Arch of Titus, c. 81 A.D., 200 cm (height), marble, Rome

Figure 58. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *The King of Rome*, 1811,

46 x 55.8 cm, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre

**Figure 59. Peter Paul Rubens, *Romulus and Remus*, 1615-1616,
210 x 212 cm, oil on canvas, Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome**

**Figure 60. Jean-Baptiste Isabey, *The King of Rome in Mars' Helmet*, 1811,
21.5 x 26.5, watercolour, Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau**

**Figure 61. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, Henri-Victor Roguier, Jean-Baptiste Odier, Pierre-Philippe
Thomire, *Cradle for the King of Rome*, 1811, 216 cm (height), gold, silver, velvet silk and tulle,
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna**

**Figure 62. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *The Tiber*, cradle for the King of Rome, c. 1811,
108 x 208 cm, black and white chalk on blue paper, present whereabouts unknown**

**Figure 63. Pierre Paul Prud'hon, *Mercury and the Seine*, Cradle for the King of Rome, c. 1811
108 x 208 cm, black and white chalk on blue paper, present whereabouts unknown**

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